









PATHWAYS  
OF THE INNER LIFE



# PATHWAYS OF THE INNER LIFE

An Anthology  
of Christian Spirituality

edited by  
*Georges A. Barrois*

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Qui non crediderit non experietur,  
et qui non expertus fuerit non intelliget.

Anselm, *de Fide Trinitatis*

He who believes not shall not experience,  
and he who experiences not shall not understand.



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# Introduction

THE PURPOSE of this book is to ask those who have been conscious of encountering God, in some observable degree, to tell us of their experience, to show us what they discovered to be the significance of faith in human life and thought.

In a sense, then, this is a journey of exploration in quest of God, Who on His side reaches out to men and women everywhere.

You are invited to join this pilgrimage, with the hope that your spirit may be strengthened and comforted along the way.

The Scripture invites men to seek God. Job sought Him everywhere, called Him and found Him not, until he heard Him answering "out of the whirlwind" (Job 23:8-9; 38:1). For God speaks: He spoke to Moses, He spoke to the Prophets, He speaks to us through Jesus Christ. But men fail to hear Him. The author of the fourth Gospel confesses this common failure of men, and affirms that alone in a personal contact with God, we may be given to see the Light, hear the Voice, and partake of the Life which is offered to each one of us.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to

them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth. ... And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace (John 1:1, 4-5, 9-14, 16).

The divine-human relationship is often expressed by the New Testament writers in terms of indwelling: "Ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20); "The Spirit... in you" (John 14:17); "Christ... in me" (Gal. 2:20); those "Which are in Christ" (Rom. 8:1). Language affords no more perfect expressions than these to communicate this ultimately indescribable intimacy of God and man. God faces man with His presence; in this alone man knows God, and this knowledge of God as in John 17:3, *is* life eternal. It can never be achieved by man's own efforts.

All true Christians have thus encountered God. They are not all equally conscious of it. There are shades of light, from the early dawn to the bright noonday. Some were moved by an elementary instinct of faith, and some were literally possessed of God.

We must bear in mind that only a small number of those who have undergone an extraordinary experience of faith have recorded their testimony in the annals of Christianity. The intimate experience of many other dedicated souls will remain God's secret forever. They may very well know the country of God far better than those who have taken care of recording their travel impressions. But only these articulate few speak to us.

And it was necessary to be selective even of this scant minority. This has not been easy. Plainly preference was to be shown to those who gave a firsthand account of their personal experience. But obviously others also had to be included, those who scarcely wrote anything but whose testimony has come down to us in legend and history. We must not deprive ourselves of so great a treasure as, for instance, the *Fioretti* of Saint Francis. Then there are those whose writings are usually poor in autobiographical elements: the true theologians through

whose doctrine shines the inner light that guided them and which illuminates them as masters of the spiritual life.

Historians and analysts have been excluded because their writings relate not their own spiritual experiences but only their observations of the lives of others. Poets and writers of hymns were omitted also, for though one would hope that their art was the result of some moving experience, it is almost impossible to draw an accurate line between the religious and the aesthetic, to decide when they were possessed of the Spirit and when they were carried on the sound waves of beautiful words. And, of course, those poets who borrow the traditional forms of Christianity to convey an experience not specifically Christian would be out of place here.

After all is said and done, our choice of authors remains to a large extent subjective and even arbitrary. We cannot say definitely, for instance, why we chose Rufus Jones in preference to Baron von Hügel or Evelyn Underhill. But whatever the process, it is most strongly to be hoped that those authors here represented include none whom one would reject a priori and that they are broadly representative of historical Christianity as it came to be diversified in time and space.

Men are generally more inclined to ask where God is to be found, than to inquire about the nature and conditions of the divine-human encounter. Since God is said to dwell on high, the movement of the soul toward God is described figuratively as an ascension. We lift our thoughts and desires from the finite that is below to the infinite that is above, from the relative to the absolute, from the ephemeral to the enduring, to the eternal. Thus, we imagine that we are coming closer and closer to God. Illusion! For all that strenuous effort of our mind, we are still earthbound. We may dream, even conceive of the perfect, the infinite, the absolute, the eternal—all terms which connote indivisibility and do not admit of more or less. But the facts give us the lie.

What we actually reach is something less imperfect, more free from limiting conditions, resisting corrupting influences

better, something greater, purer, more noble. But where do we go from here? We cannot stop. We are in an enchanted land: from the range where we stand, we see the distant mountain in all its glory, range after range, and one more range; yet we do not come nearer, for the mountain recedes as we march forward. While writing these words I hear, singing in my memory, the seemingly endless melodic figures of a thirteenth-century plain chant theme: Elijah's forty days' and forty nights' symbolic march through the barren hills of the wilderness toward an inaccessible Sinai.

The method of "soaring aloft" cannot possibly overcome the distance between man and God. Nor does it help to start exploring the depths of the self, under the pretense that "the kingdom is within you," for the impenetrability of a created soul cannot be conquered any more than the distance which separates us from the Creator. *Above* or *within* are nothing but convenient figures of speech. They do not actually locate God.

Proclaiming that God is "wholly other" will not bring us one step further. As a matter of fact, it is as good as a blunt denial of the possibility of men's ever attaining to God in any way. It may be of some help to denounce the basic inadequacy of positive statements concerning God. God is not strong as we are strong. He is not merciful as we are merciful. He is not just as we are just. His mercy, justice and strength are—if I am permitted to use a convenient Americanism—"different." The above cascade of *not, not, not*, is characteristic of the so-called negative way of Neo-Platonism, which ought not to be regarded as a way to God, but rather as a way *to speak of Him*—which is not at all the same.

The truth of the matter is that man simply cannot, by his own effort, come face to face with God. God discloses Himself to those whom He has chosen, and to whom He gives the power to perceive His presence. This power is nothing but faith, and we know from experience that faith cannot be induced: the Spirit "bloweth where it listeth." It would be pointless to scrutinize here the mystery of predestination. It is certain that the gift of faith is denied to no one, that a genuine desire

for faith is the harbinger of faith itself and that man is fully responsible for refusing God's most precious offer. It is, therefore, safe to regard faith as the necessary and sufficient means to achieve the divine-human encounter and, consequently, as the essential principle of spiritual life.

When we speak of faith, we mean faith in the personal God of the Biblical revelation: that is, as Pascal wrote, the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars, God of Jesus Christ." It follows that the spiritual life of the Christian and, for that matter, of the Jew who gives his adherence to the Gospel *in* the Old Testament, as the Spirit moves him, is entirely *sui generis*. Religious experiences outside the Judeo-Christian revelation are necessarily of another nature, and any similarity of expression between the testimony of the Jews or Christians, and that of "the heathen," belongs in the common sphere of the phenomenal. In writing this, we do not ignore that the Spirit is free, and "works when and where and how He pleases." But the fact that He visits a man whom the Gospel has not reached precisely makes this man one of the fold.

In the encounter of faith, God meets man without any intermediary. There is no interposed reality between the personality of God and the personality of man. Man is drawn into the actual presence of his Lord. That is probably what medieval scholasticism wanted to say when it called faith a "theological virtue": that is, one which would have no other object than God Himself, like also hope and charity. Thus, God was believed to be directly apprehended, trusted and loved, by the Christian. Now it is conceivable that such a contact with Him who is Life is tantamount to being reborn. It is felt that one who has met with God will never be the same again, and the new life that is in him here and now is life eternal. Moses, coming down from Mount Sinai, where he had been talking to God, had become a stranger to the Israelites, as he walked in the Presence, toward the grave "which no man has known"—a symbolic reminder that Moses ought not to be thought of as a figure of the past, long dead and buried, but as God's living instrument.

Man's immediate perception of God's active presence, or, to put it differently, his contact with the living God, is not to be confused with the mental representation of the same, whereby we seek to record our experiences for our own sake or for the sake of others. Most of the fourteenth-century mystics clearly perceived the necessity of this distinction. They often failed, however, to realize that the divine encounter, or, in their own words, "the union of the soul with God," is a normal development of faith, even though it may not be frequent. For they saw in faith nothing more than a supernatural extension of man's intellectual faculty, which operates on ideas and words, and consequently they could not conceive of actual immediacy except as a union in the order of being. This, of course, led them fatally to some sort of pantheism. But we are no longer committed to the artificial psychology of late scholasticism. I like to think of faith as engaging a Christian's total personality. We may assume that faith, at all degrees of its evolution, implies an immediate contact with God, while the recording of experience always requires a medium.

For the "I-Thou" relationship is now in the process of being described. Because of the sheer necessity of human language, God becomes an object, "Him" (often "It"), which is represented by means of symbols, images, myths, ideas and theological statements. The experience is unique, yet it admits of countless modes of expression, from the naïve anthropomorphisms of the theologically illiterate, to the subtle and often chilly analysis of the scholar, to the account of the mystic, whose glowing similes still cannot communicate satisfactorily his ineffable encounter with the living God.

It is here that the categories of Platonic contemplation—or, for that matter, of any philosophy concerned with the manner in which man expresses his relationship to spiritual realities—may be of some use, so long as we do not make the mistake of regarding them as means to discover God. This they are certainly not; they are merely aids in man's endeavor to speak of Him. Hence the most important work of the Pseudo-Dionysius is the treatise "On the Divine Names"; and the Thomist

doctrine of analogy, whereby we appraise and test the value of our locutions and notions concerning God, is outlined, not in the section of the *Summa Theologica* which deals with God's being and attributes, but in the section which deals with the problem of language.

Names and notions conceived by man fall always short of the Infinite which they are supposed to express. The native disproportion between the creations of a finite mind and the divine or the absolute are abundantly illustrated in the literature of various religions or ideologies: God's revealed name, Yahweh, is not pronounced by Jews, who substitute for it Adonai, and who punctuate the Tetragrammaton with the vowels of this less sacred designation, which men knew without special revelation. Moslems recite the ninety-nine "beautiful names" of Allah, the Clement, the Merciful, the Generous, etc., but neither men nor angels have ever known the hundredth, which alone expresses God's unutterable perfection. In a similar vein, Lao-tse (ca. 550 B.C.) declares that

The Tao that can be told of is not the absolute Tao.  
The Names that can be given are not the absolute Names.

Man's experience of faith cannot be directly expressed, but only translated; and the Italian pun *traduttore traditore*, "the translator is a traitor," applies here in full.

Not only is any account of some spiritual experience pitifully inadequate, owing to man's finiteness, but it cannot avoid being obscured and distorted because of the impact of sin on our mental abilities. Naturally, there are degrees. The average believer, if he relates his experience at all, is likely to give a rather poor account of his loose relationship with God, no matter what his theological competence may otherwise be. The saint may transpose man's noblest and most precious life experience, love, to explain what happens and what is felt when a soul is visited by God. At that height, the light of faith is apt to become so powerful that the interference of the inadequate medium and the deformation imputable to man's unfaithful-

ness are practically overcome. This does not mean that they may be ignored. Saints have always been painfully distressed at their inability to proclaim the wonders which God had wrought in them, but it is as if their shortcomings and liabilities of every sort were swallowed up in God's power, and the deformities of their testimony absorbed in God's light.

At this point I should like to raise a question of terminology. We have refrained thus far from using the words *mystic* and *mysticism*, except once or twice when the use of substitutes would have been awkward or misleading. And yet we have been dealing mostly with matters which normally belong in the field of Christian mysticism. In other words, we have been thinking of mysticism but have deliberately avoided calling it by name, and the time has come to explain why.

Many are prejudiced against mysticism, obviously because of a widespread confusion with regard to its nature and properties. What is, or is not, mysticism? To begin with, there is no such thing as mysticism in general, which we might divide into Christian mysticism, Platonic mysticism, Hindu mysticism and the like. The denominator common to these seems to be a certain ability of the human mind to rise above the usual ways of reason; but this is altogether too vague, and somehow irrelevant, for obviously the mystical process ought to be defined by the very nature of its objective.

Now this objective is for the Christian consciously to come into the presence of a personal God who he believes is his Creator and Saviour. Hence, Christian mysticism is entirely distinct from every other kind of mysticism, even if it uses similar means of expression. Nor need we be impressed by the fact that rapture occurs both among Christian saints and, say, adepts of the yoga; for rapture is by no means a necessary feature, but rather an accidental concomitant, of Christian mystical experience.

Furthermore, Christian mysticism ought not to be regarded as a process distinct from, and eventually superior to, Christian faith. Such views were held by the Gnostics, and have influenced some modern authors who distinguish between ordinary

asceticism and the mystical life, the latter being deemed the exclusive privilege of a small number of predestined souls.

On the contrary, mysticism is a normal function of faith as such, in the measure to which a man becomes aware of the secret life into which he is reborn of the Spirit and consequently engages in a renewed fellowship with God and men. Thus, mystical life begins with the first flash of faith in a man, and becomes more and more easily observable as faith grows, as darkness and dullness are gradually dispelled and as the Holy Spirit actually takes the lead.

For all these reasons, we shall be using the term *mysticism* as roughly synonymous with spiritual life, whenever this seems advisable for contextual or stylistic reasons.

It remains for us to outline, by way of preview, some of the most characteristic features of Christian mysticism, or (if the other terminology is preferred) of the spiritual life of the Christian. It consists, as has already been stated, in an intimate commerce with God—so intimate, in fact, that it may be called a communion, or (dropping the prefix) a union. Now this does not mean that the distance between God and man is wiped out, nor that the personality of man “wanes” or “melts” or “flows away” into the “increase.” Such hyperbolic statements, which occur now and then in Christian mystical writings, are not to be taken literally. For man does not really become *one* with God. Man and God are always *two*. Union is not synonymous with unification, and we should rather speak of unison, or perfect harmony, once the human soul and its power have been conquered by the Holy Spirit.

We have already noted that such an achievement does not depend on man’s exertion. We might develop this observation somewhat. First, spiritual life is not tied up with intellectual ability. Very humble people were, and are, great mystics. Joan of Arc was practically illiterate, Jacob Boehme’s greatness consists in the absolute sincerity of his conviction and not in his rehash of Paracelsus, and Brother Lawrence was certainly no theological genius.

Furthermore, spiritual progress is not proportional to the

quantity or the refinement of ascetic practices. Were it so, then dervishes and fakirs would generally be better off than Christians. Nobody would seriously challenge the genuineness of Luther's religious experience, and yet Luther can hardly qualify as an ascetic in the usual sense. The truth of the matter is that asceticism is just another means for bringing the drives and impulses of a man under the rule of his higher faculties. It is, or rather should be, only a drill and a discipline. Some Christians have practiced it to the point of heroism, and at times, perhaps, to excess. At any rate, true Christian asceticism does not proceed from the mistaken assumption that matter is bad, that everything bodily is base, and that we should free the angel in us by killing the beast.

Thus, the intimate relationship between the soul and God is not the result of man's efforts but of God's initiative. We would not seek God were we not sought by God. Christian mysticism originates in the secret operation of the Holy Spirit which cleanses, revives, comforts and directs the soul. It follows from this that the attitude of a Christian is an attitude of voluntary submission and obedience to the Spirit. It is sometimes described as passivity; yet passivity somehow implies inertia and the mystic is anything but inert under the divine motion. We would rather think in terms of receptivity, which implies open-mindedness, watchfulness, docility, prompt reactions and readiness to co-operate. These are the marks of the new life.

We have repeatedly said that faith is the principle of the new life, and that the Christian mystic is simply a man in whom faith actually strives to become the unique driving force. Consequently, the various elements which enter into the composition of the complex known as *saving faith* ought to be found in mysticism. None should be overlooked, none overstressed. Omissions, as well as exaggerations, would result in an unbalanced conception of spiritual life and eventually develop into sheer monstrosities.

There is, first of all, an element of knowledge which differs from deductive or inferential reasoning by its intuitive and, so to speak, instinctive apprehension of truth. It must be empha-

sized, however, that mystical contemplation does not differ essentially from faith perception. It is not vision. To see God face to face is not given to mortal man. The mystic still is a believer; but his faith, dim at first, attains now to the brightness of the noon. His knowledge of God is anything but abstract, and the humanity of Christ is for him the mirror in which the countenance of God is reflected.

The speculative character of some mystical writings, like those of Eckhart or Ruysbroeck, should not induce us into dreaming of any other way to God than through Christ. What they really intended was to lead their disciples, who were all nominally Christians, beyond the superficiality of mere historical Christianity. Still it remains true that the influence of Neo-Platonism weighed too heavily on their elaboration of spiritual doctrine.

Mysticism, like faith, is not only knowledge; it is love, which may be understood as disinterested friendship, inasmuch as true friends strive to procure for each other that which is best. A similar and more perfect communion in good will is realized between God and man: man loves that which God loves. This means, or should mean, the end of self-will, and of that love of creatures and of self which could not actually be referred to God's will. Now God's express will is that we may be saved. Hence, the true believer is never indifferent to his own salvation, which is the special object of God's good tidings and for which Jesus Christ gave His life. Hyperbolic expressions of absolute disinterestedness are common under the pen of spiritual authors, but they need not be construed as theological quietism, a doctrine which regards the desire for perfection and salvation as incompatible with unconditional submission to God's will, by reason of a misleading abstraction.

It would be most amazing if the rise and growth of Christian faith—or, in other words, the gradual conquest of the soul by the Spirit of God—did not stir up strong emotions. It usually does. The particular emotional note that is being struck, its intensity and duration, vary greatly from one man to another. It all depends on the secret ways of Providence, and on the psychosomatic dispositions of individual subjects,

who react differently to the solicitations of the same Spirit. Some experience an incredible serenity and peace, which is often mistaken for impassibility, and some are so deeply moved that they appear to be out of their senses; in extreme cases, these last words are to be taken quite literally, as the subject is "taken up" in ecstasy or in rapture. These exceptional "favors" belong in the phenomenology of mysticism, but are not to be regarded as essential. The emotion of the mystics, whether intense or subdued, can be one of joy or pain: joy at being carried upon the wings of the Spirit and at overcoming, through God's mercy and in His power, the drag of sinfulness; pain at realizing, in the merciless light of God's holiness, how slowly, how clumsily and how reluctantly a sinner, even repentant, corresponds to grace.

Finally, just as faith sharpens man's sense of ethical responsibility, so does mysticism lead to a full consecration of man's activities. Teresa of Avila significantly remarks that the soul becomes increasingly sensitive to the call of duty in proportion to its spiritual advancement. The closer the fellowship, the brighter the light, and the greater the faithfulness. The fact that many spiritual writers of old were monks and nuns should make us charge mysticism with being antisocial. It is high time to kill that prejudice. True mystics have never ceased to take up the burden of their fellow men, in their life of prayer and in the midst of their external deeds. It is a well-known fact that their impact on social developments is often out of proportion with the apparently narrow theater of their activity. On the other hand, there are those who were moved by the Spirit—like Vincent de Paul, for instance, or anonymous workers of the American Friends Service Committee—but who were so busy distributing food and clothing that they did not take time out to tell how they felt about it.

There are in every man's life hours of doubt when the soul is troubled. "They" were asking the Psalmist: "Where is thy God"? And we may be tempted to ask ourselves: Is faith real, or is it an illusion? A similar question is found often on the

lips of casual observers, for whom Christian mysticism appears to be nothing more than a will o' the wisp, a catching word, or at best a rationalization of noble instincts and desires without real substance.

For all that morbid scepticism, Christians of every land and every age have testified in earnest to the reality of their experience. Their testimony cannot be brushed aside. They came from diverse provinces and climates of Christendom. They did not speak the same language. They often opposed each other in theological controversies, because they had a burning passion for what they thought was the truth. They devised criteria to test the secret voices that spoke within. Are these voices consonant with the eternal Word of God, Who was made flesh, and Who, as the risen Lord, is the very soul of the Church, living in its hierarchs and its sacraments? Or do the religious instincts of men harmonize with the tradition of the apostles as it was and is being defined by the Pope of Rome and his councils? Or is the written page of the Bible the only valid touchstone to try the alloy of our faith? Or will the incontrovertible evidence of divine truth impose itself from out the silence period of a Quaker meeting and be vindicated by the fact, astonishing for unbelievers, that "it works"?

It might seem that the application of such divergent criteria could not bring about anything but Babel and confusion. Such is not the case, however. What the Christian experiences under the diversity of creeds and rituals, whether he is committed to the theology of Byzantium, or of Rome, or of Geneva, or of the younger families of believers, is one truth: God has opened for us a way of life through the dark. We need but seize His guiding hand, for He is the Holy one. Holy and strong to save. Holy and immortal.

The burden of this book is to make this plain.

## From the Church Fathers through the Thirteenth Century

CHRISTIANITY is faith in a person whose appearance in history opened for mankind a perspective beyond history—the renewed possibility of an unlimited fellowship with God, which death may not affect. Such a faith may not be reduced to a mere recitation of the scant historical facts of the life of Jesus, nor may it be regarded as just another ideology. Christians indeed have always felt the necessity of seeking the Living Word of God, beyond the man into which He was made.

As early as the second century, Christian writers began to describe their own religious experience by the analogy of Platonic contemplation. The contemplation of Supreme Truth, as Plato sees it, demands that our minds should be free from the disturbing influence of passions and of the phantasmagory of earthly appearances; only then may we become gradually acquainted with the truth, coming finally to rest in its possession.

In the same manner, the spiritual journey of the Christian was said to consist of three interrelated acts or movements, namely purification, illumination and union (or encounter) with God. While some reckless thinkers, principally in Alexandria, developed the above analogy into systems in which both

Christian and Platonic elements were altered often beyond recognition, the majority of the Church Fathers remained remarkably restrained in their use of philosophical categories. They were generally successful in maintaining the distinctive character of the Christian quest for God, the means of which is not, as in Plato, the native power of the human mind, but rather the power of divine grace, as when God draws a soul to Himself.

The goal is not the contemplation of Supreme Truth—always an abstraction, our use of capitals notwithstanding—but rather the union with a personal God. This does not mean that man will ever comprehend God, whether in the obscurity of the faith or in the full light of glory, for there is no proportion of the finite to the Infinite. Nor is contemplation detached from action. The Church Fathers never overlooked the ethical implications of spiritual life. They recalled that Plato demands that he who has seen the vision announce it to his fellow men, and that Jesus, stepping down from the mountain of the Transfiguration, went on healing lunatics and teaching dull-witted disciples.

I have selected Gregory of Nyssa as representative of the Fathers of the Eastern Church. On the one hand, he was too genuinely humble to accept the Alexandrian notion of a two-story Christianity, with the lower floor for the simple-minded folks who live by faith, and the upper floor reserved for those endowed with the spiritual insights of so-called "gnosis." On the other hand, while engaged by vow in the pursuit of Christian perfection, he never indulged in the eccentricities of the Palestinian and Egyptian ascetics. And, besides, there was much kindness in his heart, which, after all, is also a mark of authentic Christian spirit.

Gregory was born at Caesarea of Cappadocia ca. 335 A.D., the younger brother of Basil, the great monastic leader. Gregory started in life as a brilliant scholar, a teacher of rhetoric by profession. In 360, following the example of his friend and fellow student Gregory Nazianzen, he joined the Basilian

community on the banks of the river Iris. In 371 Basil, then metropolitan of Caesarea, consecrated him bishop of Nyssa, a suffragan see. Poor Gregory was at a loss. He was definitely not what we call a "church executive," and the clergy of his time, high and low, reveled in political intrigues. But he was recognized as an outstanding theologian, and the integrity of his life was never questioned. He was installed as metropolitan of Sebaste in 376, and in this capacity attended the Council of Constantinople in 381. He died in 394 or early in 395.

In his homilies and expositions of Scripture, Gregory transposes the categories of Platonic contemplation in describing the progress of a Christian's spiritual life, which, through the proper exercise of faith and love, ought to result in a clear perception of God, even on this side of eternity.

The choice of Augustine to represent the Western Fathers is a must, both because of the intrinsic quality of his doctrine and because of his lasting influence on the theology of the Church. It will suffice here to jot down the salient episodes of his life: his birth in 354 and his buoyant childhood at Thagaste in North Africa; his studies at Carthage and, while a teacher of rhetoric, his steady liaison without the bonds of marriage, and his infatuation in the sect of the Manichaeans, in which he found in the long run no real satisfaction. Next comes his journey to Italy (383) and his professorship at Milan, where the influence of Neo-Platonic circles and Ambrose's symbolical exposition of Scripture, joined to his personal meditations, disposed him favorably toward Christianity. He was baptized in 387. Back in Africa in the autumn of 388, he was ordained a priest in 391 by Valerius, bishop of Hippo Regius, whom he succeeded as head of the diocese in 395. Augustine's pastoral years were marked by his solicitude for the welfare of his flock and his clergy, as well as by his stand against sectarians and heretics: Manichaeans, Donatists and Pelagians. He died in 430, during the siege of his city by the Vandals.

It would be impossible to distinguish between Augustine's theology and spirituality. His meditation on the Scripture and

his philosophical insights shaped a total experience which derived its power from love and sensitivity to providential indications. His one theme is the restoration of fallen man in relation to God. Faith in the sense of loving trust, not axiomatic belief, is in man the means to that restoration, inasmuch as it renews his ability to "remember"—or rather to recognize—God, to understand God, to love God, whose likeness is imprinted deep in the soul. The doctrine of God's image in man was to stay as a permanent element of Christian theology, whether or not Augustine's successors regarded it as a dogma or as an illustration.

Shortly after Augustine's death, the world in which Christianity had arisen collapsed. Nothing was left of the Empire. Only the Church survived in the midst of chaos. In the East Byzantium lived on borrowed time under the threat of Islam. In the West everything had to be rebuilt. The problem was no longer to accommodate Christianity to the frame provided by pagan Rome, but to erect new structures in which Christianity would be at home. The efforts of successive generations culminated in the civilization of the thirteenth century, which is as nearly Christian as a civilization can be said to be.

Three elements were most influential in shaping the spiritual life of the Middle Ages. The first is the Augustinian axiom that short of a living faith and trust in God there can be no understanding of theological doctrines nor of the real values of creation. Medieval theology therefore stresses God's initiative, the primacy of grace, man's receptivity and the impact of love on knowledge which makes science become wisdom.

The second element is the so-called "spiritual" interpretation of Scripture, which opens vistas beyond the letter of historical events and doctrinal or legal statements. It would be humbug to pretend that this is sound expository method, but nobody can deny that some precious metal is found among the fool's gold which it yields.

The third element is the influence of the Dionysian writings.

No one doubted—Abélard is the only one who did—that they were the work of Paul's convert on Mars Hill, Dionysius the Areopagite, the first Bishop of Athens. Every schoolman owed it to himself to comment on the "Divine Names" and on the "Hierarchies." In fact, these apocryphal treatises were written by a fifth century Neo-Platonic, probably a disciple of Proclus. They do not constitute an attempt at expressing the reality of Christian experience by means of philosophical categories, but rather a downright absorption of Christianity into speculations akin to Gnosticism, with its belief that emancipation from the bondage of matter is achieved through superior forms of knowledge. Now the schoolmen appropriated in full the Dionysian version of the three acts of Platonic contemplation. These had been transformed into three successive stages of spiritual life—"purgative," "illuminative" and "unitive"—and the persons engaged in this course were classified as "beginners," "proficients" (that is, "those making progress") and "perfects." As for the ascension of the mind beyond the categories of knowledge—an upward flight consistently described by the Church Fathers—it had become in the Dionysian writings a *via negativa*, that is, a negative approach to the divine perfections.

For those who hold this view, it is meaningless to say that God is great, good, righteous and the like; at least we ought to strip our notion of God of what we call greatness, goodness or righteousness in the creatures, for God is, as some moderns would say, "wholly other." Hence, the goal of the contemplative is defined by the Pseudo-Dionysius as "unknowledge," and the "Superessence" is to be met in the absolute darkness which is said to be *the* condition for spiritual vision. The philosophers of the Middle Ages were remarkably restrained in their acceptance of these paradoxes, which they counteracted with a positive approach, qualified in turn by their doctrine of analogy. Thus the full impact of the negative approach of the Pseudo-Dionysius was not felt until the rise of German mysticism in the fourteenth century. In the same manner, the philosophers remained well on this side of the Dionysian conception of a mystical union which cannot easily

be distinguished from unification or identification, and which (once it is carried to its logical conclusions) must end in pantheism: the doctrine that the universe is God.

We have chosen the authors that follow because they appear to be typical exponents of medieval spirituality, and also because their influence was felt far beyond the limits of their age. One of the most prominent leaders during the first half of the twelfth century is Bernard of Clairvaux. He was born at Fontaines, in Burgundy, in 1090. At the age of twenty-two, he entered the monastery of Cîteaux with several companions. In 1115 his abbot sent him to found Clairvaux, in order to relieve the parent monastery which had become over-populated. Under Bernard's leadership, Clairvaux became a reformation center, the influence of which was soon felt throughout the Cistercian obedience and also in the monastic order at large. The emphasis was on silence, austerity and manual work as means of perfection. It reflected the founder's sternness of character, in the service of an absolute devotion to Christ and the Church. Bernard devoted himself to the extirpation of foul practices, the reformation of ecclesiastical government (Papal government included), the preaching of the Crusade, and the creation of the military order of the Templars. He died at Clairvaux in 1153.

Bernard distrusted theory and hated speculation. He did not like to think that monks might become scholars, hence his prejudices against the Benedictines of Cluny. Hence, too, his bitter zeal in denouncing Abélard, whose theological adventurousness he could not bear. Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, had probably no more use for it than Bernard, yet it is through his kindness that Abélard was allowed to die in peace. Bernard expounded his doctrine in short treatises and in familiar addresses to the monks, whom he regarded as minors to be guided with a loving, yet firm hand. The symbolism of his Biblical exposition must be understood in the light of the medieval practice of the *lectio divina*, or devotional Scripture reading, the purpose of which was not to acquire theological knowledge, but rather to experience God. The practical char-

acter of the spirituality of Bernard is best illustrated by his remark on the traditional degrees of Christian humility, which we are "to mount, not to count."

Hugh (Hugo) of St. Victor was a contemporary of Bernard: a gentle soul without the tenseness of the monastic reformer, a scholar who spent his days in the obscurity of his cloister, devoted to his students, didactic without pedantry and a peacemaker. He was born between 1096 and 1101, some say in Flanders or in Lorraine, and some say in Saxony, which seems more probable. There is evidence that at least part of his youth was spent in that province; he dedicated his treatise *De arrha animae* to the monks of Hammersleben in Saxony, and the imagery of his writings points toward Middle Germany as the country of his adolescence. Like so many young men of his time he journeyed to Paris, where he joined the regular canons of the abbey of St. Victor in 1118. Hugh became leader of the cloister schools in 1131, held various offices in the abbey (although not that of abbot) and died in 1141.

Were it not for the strength of his theological thinking, this quiet man would be unknown to us. His monumental *De sacramentis* opens before us the vision of a meaningful universe where the shadow of the living God appears under the realities of our world at every instant of time and every point in space. This includes, of course, the historical dispensation of God's redeeming love and what we call the sacraments—hence, the influence which he exerted on subsequent medieval theologians. More interesting for our purpose, however, are his spiritual treatises and expositions on Scripture, which, like those of Bernard, grew out of the practice of the *lectio divina*.

The thirteenth century is characterized by the rise of the orders of friars, whose democratic organization contrasted with the quasi-feudal institutions of the monastic and canonical orders. The friars built their monasteries in the midst of populated centers, and they exerted a deep influence, both social and doctrinal, on the citizenry. The popularity of Francis of Assisi, the patriarch of the Minors (or Gray Friars),

extended far beyond the limits of his age, and he has found grace in the eyes of those among Protestants who are least inclined to worship the saints of Rome. His real name was Giovanni Bernardone. He was born at Assisi in 1811, the son of a rich merchant. A lad of buoyant spirits, he did some soldiering and was taken prisoner during a local conflict with the Perugini. After his release, he turned to religion and presented himself stark naked to the bishop of Assisi, in whose hands he vowed evangelical poverty.

He took to wandering in the hills, together with a few companions. Having heard a preacher who deplored the ruinous condition of the Church, he restored with his own hands a dilapidated chapel in a suburb of his native city. Later he journeyed to the Holy Land and preached to the Sultan of Egypt, who received him with the particular indulgence which Islam shows to the feeble-minded.

In this the Sultan was grossly mistaken, for in spite of all his clowning, Francis was no clown, rather what the Eastern Orthodox call a "fool in Christ." He was a very lucid fool, reacting with deliberate application against the sophistication of his contemporaries who ignored the Gospel, or by-passed it or cleverly explained it out. Francis always took an impish delight in bursting the bags of wind of conventional, comfortable Christianity. Unfortunately, his peripatetic asceticism had not prepared him to become the founder of a religious order. He gave some rules to his companions: in 1209 the *Regula Prima*; in 1221 he composed the *Regula Secunda*, which the Holy See refused to approve; and when finally the third rule was sanctioned by a Papal bull in 1223, Francis fled to the solitude of La Verna in the Apennines, where Christ appeared to him under the guise of a six-winged seraph and marked him with the stigmata of the Passion. In 1226 in the midst of the friars gathered at Assisi, Francis begged to be stripped of his frock and laid himself down to die.

Francis is a master but not a schoolmaster. He left almost no writings, except the so-called "Canticle of the Sun" and short fragments in prose. We know him through the *Fioretti*, a collection of episodes of his wandering life, which bear unmistak-

ably the mark of his personality—singularly familiar and entralling.

We close this survey with the twin star theologians of the thirteenth century: Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas. Bonaventura, son of a physician of Viterbo, Giovanni Fidanza, was born in 1221. He entered the order of Minors (Franciscans) most probably in 1243 and was sent to Paris where he began to study under Alexander of Hales, the first Franciscan doctor. From 1248 to 1257, while a young instructor, he weathered successfully the storms of opposition raised by the secular masters against the participation of the friars in the life of the university. Shortly after his promotion to a master's chair in 1257, he was elected Minister General of the Minors. He completed the organization of the order on the basis of the *Regula Bullata*, the one rule approved by the Pope, and retired for a while to La Verna, where he wrote the biography of Francis. During his administration, he was called on to contribute to the reconciliation of Eastern Orthodoxy with Rome. Created cardinal in 1273, he attended the Council of Lyons, where the long-sought union was sealed on July 6, 1274. He died eight days later, and thus was spared the sight of the definitive collapse of the reconquered unity under the pressure of political factors.

The doctrine of Bonaventura is contained in his commentary of the Lombard's *Sentences*, the textbook of all medieval universities. It is, however, in his shorter works that Bonaventura gives his full measure—particularly in the *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, "The mind's road to God." It presents us with a most lucid theory of religious knowledge, as well as with a penetrating analysis of a Christian's spiritual ways. Here the author's mental sharpness matches his mystical insight, and his theological skill is equal to the depths of his religious experience.

Thomas Aquinas, the youngest son of the Count of Aquino, was born in 1225 in the castle fortress of Roccasecca, and he received his first schooling in the near-by Abbey of Monte

Cassino. While still an adolescent, he was sent by his parents to the University of Naples, where he studied the liberal arts. In 1244 he became acquainted with the Master General of the Preachers (Dominicans) and decided to join the order. This was a great disappointment to his family, who had set their hearts on his obtaining the abbatial seat at Monte Cassino as a worthy start of an ecclesiastical career.

The following year he journeyed to Paris, where he began his theological studies under Albertus Magnus. He followed his master to the new *studium generale* of Cologne and returned to Paris in 1252. In 1256 he was appointed to one of the two university chairs conceded grudgingly to his order. From 1259 to 1268 we find him in Italy, preacher and theological adviser to the pontifical court; then back in Paris from 1268 to 1272, when he spoke for the university privileges of the friars against the opposition of the secular masters. In 1272 he journeyed back to Italy on official business. In the spring of 1274 he was on his way to the Council of Lyons, to which he had been summoned in his capacity as a theologian, when he fell ill and died in the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova.

The pedestrian ways of Aquinas as a theologian contrast sharply with the bold flight of the figures whom we have reviewed thus far. His fellow students in Paris had nicknamed him the "Ox," and we are tempted to sympathize with them. His analytical minuteness in the two *Summae* and also in the *Compendium Theologiae* (which he composed at the request of his companion Reginald of Pimperno) somehow obscures the penetrating power of his judgment and the depth of his religious experience, which we know only through his early biographers. His prosaic testimony to the reality of spiritual life is all the more valuable for giving us the assurance that we are not chasing phantoms in the company of wild dreamers. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to select quotable material from the writings of Aquinas; most of the time he proceeds with brief notations which, apart from a thorough understanding of his frame of reference, make little sense and can even be misleading.

Gregory of Nyssa  
ca. 335-395

1

## The Clean of Heart Shall See God

*On the Beatitudes, Sermon Six*  
Translated by HILDA C. GRAEF

Here Gregory states the conditions of our knowledge of God. Indeed we may learn about God through His handiwork. Yet, to be taught some truths about God is one thing, and to know Him is another. Now God is present within us, but we are blind, and no amount of intellectual exertion can help us to overcome our blindness. What we need is to restrain our vices, silence our passions, and rid ourselves of the illusion of discovering God in the dreams of our fantasy or through the devices of our reason. Only then may we hope to recover our ability to see. Plato required a similar purification. But it is the voice of Christ we now hear, an echo from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

**T**HE DIVINE nature, whatever it may be in itself, surpasses every mental concept. For it is altogether inaccessible to reasoning and conjecture, nor has there been found any human faculty capable of perceiving the incomprehensible; for we cannot devise a means of understanding inconceivable things.

Therefore the great apostle calls His ways “unsearchable” (Rom. 11:33), meaning by this that the way that leads to the knowledge of the divine essence is inaccessible to thought. That is to say, none of those who have passed through life before us has made known to the intelligence so much as a trace by which might be known what is above knowledge.

Since such is He whose nature is above every nature, the Invisible and Incomprehensible is seen and apprehended in another manner. Many are the modes of such perception. For it is possible to see Him who has “made all things in wisdom” (Ps. 104:24) by way of inference through the wisdom that appears in the universe. It is the same as with human works of art where, in a way, the mind can perceive the maker of the product that is before it, because he has left on his work the stamp of his art. In this, however, is seen not the nature of the artist, but only his artistic skill which he has left impressed on his handiwork....

But the meaning of the Beatitude is not restricted only to this, that He who operates can be known by analogy through his operations; for perhaps the wise of this world, too, might gain some knowledge of the transcendent wisdom and power from the harmony of the universe. No; I think this magnificent Beatitude proffers another counsel to those able to receive and contemplate what they desire....

The Lord does not say it is blessed to know something about God, but to have God present within oneself. “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). I do not think that if the eye of one’s soul has been purified, he is promised a direct vision of God; but perhaps this marvellous saying may suggest what the Word expresses more clearly when He says to others, “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). By this we should learn that if a man’s heart has been purified from every creature and all unruly affections, he will see the image of the divine nature in its own beauty. I think that in this short saying the Word expresses some such counsel as this: There is in you, human beings, a desire to contemplate the true good. But when you hear that

the divine Majesty is exalted above the heavens, that its glory is inexpressible, its beauty ineffable, and its nature inaccessible, do not despair of ever beholding what you desire. It is indeed within your reach; you have within yourself the standard by which to apprehend the Divine. For He who made you did at the same time endow your nature with this wonderful quality. For God imprinted on it the likeness of the glories of His own nature, as if moulding the form of a carving into wax. But the evil that has been poured all around the nature bearing the divine image has rendered useless to you this wonderful thing, that lies hidden under vile coverings. If, therefore, you wash off by a good life the filth that has been stuck on your heart like plaster, the divine beauty will again shine forth in you.

## 2

## The Vigil of the Soul

*Homilia X in Cant.  
MIGNE, Patrologia Graeca, XLIV, col. 992-993*

The following is taken from a homily on the Song of Songs, allegorically interpreted. Earthly things and earthly cares must wane if the soul is to become aware of God, and the living encounter takes place in a state of which the sleep of Solomon's bride is an apt symbol. Senses are numbered, and the usual activities of the mind are suspended, while the heart remains awake and perceives the divine presence.

¶ **I**SLEEP, but my heart waketh" (Cant. 5:2). In what sense shall we take these words? Sleep resembles death, for in sleep all the operations of the senses do cease; neither sight, nor hearing, nor smell, nor taste, nor touch, exercise their own activity in the time of sleep. Sleep relaxes bodily tension;

it makes us forget human cares, it allays fear, it placates anger, soothes bitter and harsh feelings, suspends our awareness of all ills, as long as it holds our body under its power. From what was said, we may now learn how the soul rises above itself, that we can glory in saying: "I sleep, but my heart waketh." Indeed, as long as the spirit lives alone by itself, undisturbed by sensations of any kind, the body remains inert as in slumber or in sleep. We may rightly say that the sight is asleep on account of its being inactive, while it despises such spectacles as fill childish eyes with awe. I am not speaking of earthly things only, as gold and silver, or gems whose bright colors are an enticement for the eyes, but also of celestial wonders, the brilliance of the stars, the course of the sun, the phases of the moon, and whatever charms our eyes, for none of these endure for ever; on the contrary, they are driven and carried away with the march of time. If we disregard all such spectacles for the sake of contemplating the real goods, our bodily eyes remain inactive, and our soul, being more mature, is not being dragged downwards by the things that are offered to our sight, for our mind looks only toward realities higher than the visible world. In the same manner, our hearing dies out and becomes inert, while our soul is concerned with those things that are above reason.

As for the senses which are more akin to the brutes, they are not worth mentioning. The soul, affected as it were with a stench of death, spurns smell, a catcher of scents through the nostrils; taste, an assiduous worshipper of the belly; and also touch, a servile and dumb sense, which perhaps nature created only for the sake of the blind. It is as if all the senses were overcome by sleep and numbed. The activity of the soul is pure, reason looks upwards and remains undisturbed and unpolluted from the activity of the senses. For human nature knows two kinds of pleasure: one within the soul, which is procured through impassibility; the other in the body, through passion. Now the one which we choose gets the best of the other. The man who is looking for sensation draws to himself that pleasure which is rooted in the body; he may well spend

all his life without a taste of divine blessedness, since the greater good uses to be obscured by the lesser. But for those who, through desire, incline toward the divine, the good remains unobscured, and they hold whatever may enthrall the senses as to be shunned. This is why the soul whose only delight is the contemplation of the Being, is awake to none of the pleasures of the senses; every bodily activity is now asleep, and man, in a state of spiritual purity and nudity, receives God's self-manifestation in this divine vigil.

## 3

## The Ascent of God's Mountain

*De Vita Moysis*  
MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeca* XLIV, col. 404-405

This selection states a law—or rather a paradox—of spiritual dynamics. We read in Exodus how Moses ascended Mount Sinai and found a place where he could stand before God. This was no abiding place but merely a temporary resting place, for a soul's quest never ends, even in God's presence. Contemplation is not the condition of one who has finished seeking. On the contrary, "to see God is precisely this, that the desire to see will never be satisfied." Possession is not immobility. Striving may cease, but the soul shall continue unremittingly, unerringly, from vision to vision, from splendor to splendor. Gregory's spiritual universe on either side of death is, like the universe of modern scientists, a universe in expansion. The shelf of rock on which

Moses stood is said to be the figure of Christ—after the analogy of 1 Cor. 10:4—for Christ alone is able to sustain us all the way. Without Him all our toil leads vigorously nowhere.

**A** COMPREHENSION of the unseen God is by nature unthinkable, for there is no way for the mind to grasp the incomprehensible. Thus every desire of the divine beauty, every craving to make the ascent of the mountain, is made ever more tense in the endless pursuit. And to see God is precisely this, that the desire to see will never be satisfied. Rather, what we are already able to see must set us afire with the desire to see more. For no limit shall ever stop the progress of our ascent to God, since the end of the divine beauty is never to be found, and since the craving for the good can never be quenched by any degree of fulfillment.

Now, what is this “place” which is said to be by God? (Ex. 33:21).... The meaning of this harmonizes readily with what we have already examined. When God says “a place,” He does not point to a space locally circumscribed, for that which is not quantitative cannot possibly be measured. While speaking in terms of spatial delimitation, He intends rather to lead by the hand whoever listens, toward the infinite and the eternal, and this seems to be the meaning of His words: Because desire drives thee forward, because no satiety will ever stop thy course, since one cannot be satiated with the good while passion always looks for more, there is by Me a “space” so wide that he who races will never reach the term of his course. Yet this course, from another point of view, is a “stand.” For God says: “I shall have thee stand on the rock” (Ex. 33:21). Now this is the greatest paradox, that standing and moving are the same, for he who moves on does not stand still, and he who is at a stand is not in progress; here however he is progressing by reason of his standing still. For a man liable to slip and fall as his fancy drives him, does not stand immovable in the good, but, according to the saying of the Apostle (Eph. 4:14), is

being “tossed to and fro and carried about” by the opinions of men on things, always uncertain and ever trembling; such a man shall never reach the summit of perfection. He is like those who climb sand dunes; whatever long strides they take, they toil in vain, for the sand slips down as they go. There is exertion and movement, yet this movement leads to nowhere. But if someone, as it is written in the Psalm, draws his feet from the bottom of the abyss and “sets them upon the rock” (Ps. 40:2)—now the rock is Christ, the fulness of perfection—he shall pursue his course the faster for his being now “steadfast and immovable” in the good, according to the counsel of Paul (1 Cor. 15:58). His stability he uses like a wing, for, through steadfastness in the good, his soul is given wings in view of the upward journey.

Augustine  
354-430

4

## Likeness and Vision

*Enarratio in Ps. 100*  
Translation in Oxford Library of Fathers

Here we become acquainted with Augustine's categories of "similitude" and "dissimilitude," which have played an important role in the writings of Christian mystics. One condition of our apprehension of God is that there must be a certain similitude, or congeniality, between the one who apprehends and the One who is apprehended—or rather lets Himself be apprehended. It is not sufficient that the soul, like God, is actually spirit; what is needed is that the soul be purified and renewed in love. Augustine could never forget the time when he dwelt "in the parts of dissimilitude," and when no true vision was open to him but the fallacy of a lifeless mirage.

THE SIGHT of God is promised to the human heart, and a certain operation of purifying the heart is enjoined; this is the counsel of Scripture. Provide the means of seeing what thou lovest, before thou try to see it. For unto whom is it not sweet to hear of God and His Name, except to the ungodly,

who is far removed, separated from Him? "For lo, saith he, they that make themselves far from Thee shall perish" (Ps. 73:27).... And what is said unto us, when found afar off? "Come unto Him, and be lightened" (Ps. 34:5). But that thou mayest approach and be lightened, thy darkness must offend thee; condemn what thou art, that thou mayest deserve to be what thou art not. Thou art ungodly, thou oughtest to be righteous: thou wilt never understand righteousness, if iniquity still please thee. Crush it in thy heart, and purify that; drive it from thy heart, wherein He whom thou wishest to see wills to dwell. The human soul, then, cometh near as it may, the inner man is regenerated to the image of God; he had become far from God in proportion as he had become unlike God. For we do not approach or recede from God by intervals of space; when thou hast become unlike, thou hast receded far: when thou hast become like, thou hast approached very close....

Be therefore like Him in piety, and earnest in meditation: for "the invisible things of Him . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20); look upon the things that are made, admire them, seek their author. If thou art unlike, thou wilt turn back; if like, thou wilt rejoice. And when, being like Him, thou shalt have begun to approach Him, and to feel God, the more love increaseth in thee, since God is love, thou wilt perceive somewhat which thou wast trying to say, and yet couldest not say. Before thou didst feel God, thou didst think that thou couldest express God; thou beginnest to feel Him, and then feelest that what thou dost feel thou canst not express. But when thou hast herein found that what thou dost feel cannot be expressed, wilt thou be mute, wilt thou not praise God? Wilt thou then be silent in the praises of God, and wilt thou not offer up thanksgiving unto Him who hath willed to make Himself known unto thee? . . . Consider thyself, see what thou art: earth and ashes; look who it is hath deserved to see, and what; consider who thou art, what to see, A man to see God! I recognise not the man's deserving, but the mercy of God.

## 5

## God's Image in the Soul

*De Trinitate*, Book XIV

Translated by J. BURNABY

In this passage of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine states his doctrine of the image of God in the human soul. It was selected because it taxes our theological susceptibility less than similar passages in which the parallel between the Trinity of the divine persons and the trinity of human faculties is overdrawn. Here we stand on practical ground: God's image cannot possibly be restored in us to its original clarity unless we are active in reordering our life according to the will and power of God.

THE TRINITY of the mind is God's image, not because the mind remembers, understands and loves itself; but because it has the power also to remember, understand and love its Maker. And it is in so doing that it attains wisdom. . . . Let the mind then remember its God, in whose image it was made, let it understand Him and love Him. . . . Those who are moved by the reminder to turn again to the Lord, out of that state of deformity wherein worldly desires conformed them to this world, must receive from the Lord their re-formation, according to the apostle's saying: "Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in newness of your mind" (Rom. 12:2); the beginning of the image's re-forming must come from Him who first formed it. The self which it was able to

deform, it cannot of itself re-form. . . . Through sin, righteousness and holiness of truth were lost; wherefore this image has become deformed and faded. The mind receives it again, when it is re-formed and renewed. . . . Of course, the renewal of which we speak is not effected in the single moment of return, like the renewal which takes place in baptism in a single moment through the remission of all sins—none whatsoever remaining unremitted. But it is one thing to be relieved of fevers, and another to regain health after the weakness which fevers have caused. It is one thing to withdraw a dart from the body, and another to heal by further treatment the wound it has inflicted. So here, cure's beginning is to remove the cause of sickness; and that is done through the forgiveness of all sins. Its furtherance is the healing of the sickness itself, which takes effect by gradual process in the renewal of the image. . . . Of this the apostle has spoken in plain terms: "If your outward man decays, yet is your inward man renewed from day to day" (2 Cor. 4:16)—renewed, as he has told us, "in the knowledge of God," that is, "in righteousness and holiness of truth." He who is thus renewed by daily advancing in the knowledge of God, in righteousness and holiness of truth, is changing the direction of his love from the temporal to the eternal, from the visible to the intelligible, from the carnal to the spiritual; diligently endeavouring to curb and abate all lust for the one, and to bind himself in charity to the other. In which all his success depends on the divine aid; for it is the word of God, that "without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

When life's last day finds a man, in such advancing and increasing, firm in the faith of the Mediator, the holy angels will be waiting to bring him home to the God whom he has served and by whom he must be perfected; and at the world's end he will receive an incorruptible body, not for punishment but for glory. For in this image the likeness of God will be perfect only in the perfect vision of God: of which vision the apostle Paul says: "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12).

## 6

## The Rapture at Ostia Tiberina

*Confessions*, IX:10  
Translated by J. G. PILKINGTON

Taken from the *Confessions*, "The Rapture at Ostia Tiberina" describes a spiritual ascension of Augustine and his mother into the beyond, where things temporal wane, and where the self is left behind. This is "ecstasy" in its primary sense: not a suspension of consciousness but rather a projection of the soul, under the impulse of love, beyond the normal sphere of activity of the human mind.

AS THE DAY now approached on which she (Augustine's mother) was to depart this life, which day Thou knewest, we did not, it fell out—Thou, as I believe, by Thy secret ways arranging it—that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, from which the garden of the house we occupied at Ostia could be seen; at which place, removed from the crowd, we were resting ourselves for the voyage, after the fatigues of a long journey. We then were conversing alone very pleasantly; and, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13), we were seeking between ourselves in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, of what nature the eternal life of the saints would be, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9). But yet we opened wide the mouth of our heart, after those supernal streams of Thy fountain, "the fountain of life," which is "with Thee" (Ps. 36:9); that being sprinkled with it

according to our capacity, we might in some measure weigh so high a mystery.

And when our conversation had arrived at that point, that the very pleasure of the carnal senses, and that in the very brightest material light, seemed by reason of the sweetness of that life not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention, we, lifting ourselves with a more ardent affection towards the "Self-same," did gradually pass through all corporeal things, and even the heaven itself, whence sun, and moon, and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we soared higher yet by inward musing, and discoursing, and admiring Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might advance as high as that region of unfailing plenty, where "Thou feedest Israel" (Ps. 80:1) for ever with the food of truth, and where life is that Wisdom by whom all these things are made, both which have been, and which are to come; and she is not made, but is as she hath been, and so shall ever be; yea, rather, to "have been," and "to be hereafter," are not in her, but only "to be," seeing she is eternal, for to "have been" and "to be hereafter" are not eternal. And while we were thus speaking, and straining after her, we slightly touched her with the whole effort of our hearts; and we sighed, and there left bound "the first-fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23); and returned to the noise of our own mouth, where the word uttered has both beginning and end. And what is like unto Thy Word, our Lord, who remaineth in Himself without becoming old, and "maketh all things new?" (Wisd. 7:27).

We were saying, then, if to any man the tumult of the flesh were silenced, silenced the phantasies of earth, waters, and air, silenced, too, the poles; yea, the very soul be silenced herself, and go beyond herself by not thinking of herself, silenced fancies and imaginary revelations, every tongue, and every sign, and whatsoever exists by passing away, since, if any could hearken, all these say, "We created not ourselves, but were created by Him who abideth for ever"; if, having uttered this, they now should be silenced, having only quickened our ears to Him who created them, and He alone speak not by them, but

by Himself, that we may hear His Word, not by fleshly tongue, nor angelic voice, nor sound of thunder, nor the obscurity of a similitude, but might hear Him, Him whom in these we love, without these, likeas we two now strained ourselves, and with rapid thought touched on that Eternal Wisdom which remaineth over all. If this could be sustained, and other visions of a far different kind be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb, and envelope its beholder amid these inward joys, so that his life might be eternally like that one moment of knowledge which we now sighed after, were not this "Enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord"? (Matt. 25:21). And when shall that be? When we shall all rise again; "but all shall not be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51, Vulg.).

**Bernard of Clairvaux  
1090-1153**

7

## Love's Progress

*De diligendo Deo, Chap. 15*  
Translated by TERENCE L. CONNOLLY

Bernard describes the degrees of love with the same practical character as is inherent in his remark on degrees of Christian humility: which we are "to mount, not to count." The progression of love is from the love of self to the love of God for the sake of self, to the love of God and self for the sake of God, to the love of God without regard to self.

**B**ECAUSE we are carnal and are born of the concupiscence of the flesh, it follows as a necessary consequence that our desire for personal gratification, or our love, should have its source in the flesh. But if it is directed according to the right order of things, it will at last be consummated by the spirit because "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46); and of necessity we bear the resemblance, first, of the earthly, second, of the heavenly. First, therefore, man loves himself for his own sake; for he is flesh and he can have no taste for anything except in relation to himself. And when he sees that he cannot subsist of himself, he begins to seek God through faith as something, as it were, necessary for him, and to love

Him. Thus he loves God according to the second degree, but for his own sake, not for Himself. But when, in truth, on account of his own necessity, he has begun to worship and come to Him again and again by meditating, by reading, by prayer and by being obedient, little by little God becomes known to him through experience, in a sort of familiarity, and consequently He grows sweet; and thus by tasting how sweet the Lord is, he passes to the third degree so that he loves God now not for his own sake but for Himself. Yes, in this degree he stands still for a very long time and I know not if the fourth degree is attained in its perfection by any man in this life so that forsooth, a man loves himself only for the sake of God. If there are any who have experience of this let them declare it; to me, I confess, it seems impossible. But it will be so, beyond a doubt, when the good and faithful servant has been brought into the joy of his Lord and "inebriated with the plenty of God's house" (Ps. 36:8). For, forgetful of himself in a wonderful way, as it were, and as if entirely free of self he will continue on, wholly, into God, and thereafter being joined to Him he will be one spirit with Him.

## 8

## Love's Order

*Sermon 50 in Cant.*

This ideal portrait of the man whose life has been totally reshaped by divine love is taken from an exposition on the Song of Solomon.

**G**IVE ME a man who, before all things, loves God with all he has; who loves himself and his neighbor in the measure in which each loves God; who loves his enemy as one who perhaps may love him some day; who loves his parents in the

flesh tenderly, on account of nature, his masters in the spirit dearly, on account of grace; whose love for all creatures is regulated by his love for God; who despises the earth, looks up to heaven, uses this world as if he were not using it; who, by a secret sense of his soul, discerns the things which are to be used and those which are to be enjoyed for themselves, so that he relates transitory means to transitory ends and only as the present need requires, while embracing things eternal with an eternal desire. Give me, I say, such a man, and I will boldly pronounce him wise, who takes things for what they really are, and has a right with truth and assurance to boast saying: "God has ordered charity in me" (Cant. 2:4, Vulg.).

## 9

## How the Divine Presence Is Felt in Various Ways

*Sermon 31 in Cant.*  
Translated by TERENCE L. CONNOLLY

This piece illustrates the various modes in which God is known to man. Bernard is not interested in the roundabout way of learning about God from "the things that are made," nor in the extraordinary visions which are the privilege of the few. He is concerned with the awareness of God's presence within the soul—as the bridegroom, the physician, the companion, the father "whose house is rich in bread" or the king who admits his chosen ones to the secrets of his inner chamber.

**B**EWARE lest you think that in the mingling of the Word and the soul, we are sensibly aware of anything corporeal or imaginary. We are saying only what the Apostle says, that

"he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The raising up of the pure soul to God, or the hallowed descent of God to the soul, we express in our own words as we are able, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. And so it is that in the spirit this union is brought about because "God is a spirit" (John 4:24), and longs for the beauty of that soul which, perchance, He may have observed walking in the spirit and having no desire to "fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16), especially if He perceives it burning with love of Him. A soul therefore thus affected and thus beloved will in no wise be content with that manifestation of the bridegroom which is granted to many through the things which are made, or that which is granted to a few through visions and dreams. Such a soul will not be satisfied unless by special prerogative she receives Him in the most intimate of affections, and that in the innermost recesses of the heart; and unless she possesses Him whom she desires, present not in some outward form, but intimately united to her, within: not appearing to her without, but affecting her, internally. Nor can there be any doubt but that He will be a source of delight greater according to the degree that He is within, not without. For He is the Word making no sound, but penetrating the soul; not full of words, but powerful in effects; not sounding in the ears, but speaking the language of love to the affections. His countenance is not confined to a particular form, but it moulds the countenances of others. It is not such as strikes the eyes of the body, but it rejoices the sight of the heart, for its blessing is the very gift of love, not its mere appearance.

I would not say, however, that when He appears in this wise, He manifests Himself as He is, although He does not manifest Himself as altogether different than He is. Nor will He be constantly manifest in this manner even to the most devout minds. And neither will He manifest Himself in one and the same way to all. For according to the various desires of the soul, the savor of the divine presence must vary, and the infused taste of heavenly sweetness must delight the palate of the hungry soul now in one way, now in another. Also, you

have noticed in this Song of Love how often He has changed His countenance and with "how great a multitude of sweet-ness" (Ps. 31:19) He is pleased to be transformed in the presence of His beloved; and how at one time like a modest bride-groom He seeks the secret embraces of the holy soul and finds His delight in kisses. But at another time He appears as a physician with oil and ointments, because of those delicate and weak souls who still have need of lenitives and medicines and hence are designated by the tender name of "young maidens." If anyone murmurs at this, let him hear, that "they that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill" (Matt. 9:12). Now again, a traveller, as it were, He joins the company of the spouse and the "young maidens" who accompany her, and He lightens the fatigues of the journey for the whole company by His conversation delightful beyond measure, so that they say as He departs: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way?" (Luke 24:32). He is an eloquent companion whose kind words and manners invite all men to follow in His train, attracted as they are by the sweet fragrance of His balm, and saying: "We shall run after Thee because of the savour of Thy good ointments" (Cant. 1:3, Vulg.). Again, at times He comes as the very wealthy head of a family, so to speak, whose house is rich in bread; or rather as a king great and powerful who comes to dispel the diffidence of His poor bride, to stimulate her desire by showing her all the desirable things of His glory, the riches of His wine-presses and storehouses, the abundance of His gardens and fields, and finally, even admitting her into the very secrets of His inner chamber. Truly "the heart of her husband trusteth in her" (Prov. 31:11) and there is nothing of all His possessions which He thinks should be hidden from her whom He has rescued from destitution, whom He has proved faithful, whom He embraces as worthy of His love. And thus, He does not cease in one internal way or another to manifest Himself without ceasing to the gaze of those who seek Him, so that the word may be fulfilled which said: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Hugh of St. Victor  
*ca. 1100-1141*

10

## Growing in the Father's House

*De Vanitate Mundi*, Book 2

There was once a landowner—it must have been in Middle Germany—who had a son. The boy grew up in the manor, surrounded by the love of his father and the warmth of all the familiar things around him, taking part in the common toil, sharing in the harvest and in joys and sorrows. In the best tradition of the masters, Hugh leaves unstated the detailed application of the parable. God, of course, is the father of the household, and we are invited to learn a lesson from the small son.

THE INNER dwelling which we are wont to name after various similes, now an ark, now a house, is like the home of a rich father, and the human soul like a tender son, who is reared in his father's house with as much care as he is dearly loved. Let us therefore consider how a little child lives in the home of his father, since it behoves us to dwell in God's house in a like manner, as He Himself said: "Unless you become like children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Now what does the little one do? He is not anxious, he is not covetous, he is busy playing in simplicity and innocence; he likes it so much at home that even if he were

transferred to the king's palace he would rather have his old things and he would yearn for the familiar surroundings. He knows the goods his father owns; he runs through the fields, the gardens, the orchards, the meadows, to the fountains, to the vineyards, enjoying the pleasures of each season. He walks behind the plowman and the sower at springtime, accompanies the farmhands gathering the harvest in summer, the grapes in the fall. He finds everywhere something good, some fun, some solace, some enjoyment. He feeds daily on the family meals, and the fare of the servants he tastes now and then for a change. He likes to pluck the first fruits of the season, to reap tender ears of corn toasted over a fire, to pick ripening berries, to search for birds' nests and to bring home with great glee and mirth the eggs or the young he has found. He is more eager to eat of his own game, even so meager, than from the plenty of the pantry. If he happens to hear that his father is about to go to a farm, to a castle, to the market, or to a feast, and will return soon, he wishes to go with father to see new and unusual sights, that on their coming back he might tell his comrades all he saw: how people were dressed, and the sites and places, and how big were the towns, how tall the houses, how plenteous the wares on sale, and what he did find, what he bought, what he brought back. He likes to go on a journey, seeing that he will be back. But if he were forced into exile without hope ever to return, he would not leave his father's home without much weeping and distress. He likes to go and come back, to see what is abroad; at times he even craves for it, that he might return to his people richer or better equipped. Yet nowhere does he desire to dwell for ever, but in the home of his father, with his kindred at home, among whom he was born, and with whom he was brought up. He wishes to live and grow old in their midst, never to be separated from them even in death, that dying he forsake not those who in life were familiar and dear to him. He desires for ever to have these companions, this mansion, these pleasures, this gladness. He cares for nothing but these, he wishes for nothing more.

Let us aim at living likewise in the house of the Lord, and we

also shall find peace and rest and gladness. May we, in all simplicity, be not covetous of alien goods, but, above all the charms of this world, appreciate those joys which God has prepared for us, and which are found in His house.

## 11

## Upward Is Inward

*De Vanitate Mundi, Book 2*

This selection will help us to understand terms having to do with spatial or local reference, such as *progress, ascension, lifting up our hearts*, etc. Hugh explains that *upward* means *inward*. We are not going to meet God in outer space in fact or in imagination, but within ourselves. Ecstasy, in its proper meaning, ought really to be called *home-coming*—when the true self stands in God's presence.

WHEN we endeavor to lift up the eyes of our mind to things unseen, we have regard to similitudes from the visible things, as if they were as many steps toward knowledge. Thus, when we speak of something as "the highest," in spiritual or invisible matters, this does not mean something located above the pole of heavens, but rather "the innermost." Hence, to ascend to God is in reality to enter the self, and not only this, but, in some indescribable manner, to pass beyond the self in depth. He who, so to speak, enters his own self and transcends it inwardly, he ascends to God indeed. When man, through the senses of his body, goes out with desire toward the visible things, which are passing and perishable, he truly declines from his natural dignity to that which is low and base. That which is innermost, is also nearest and highest and eternal. That which is outermost is lowest and remote and perishable.

To shift, therefore, from the outermost to the innermost, is the same as to ascend from the lowest to the highest, and to recollect oneself out of a state of dispersion, confusion and instability. Knowing as we do that the world is external to us, while God is inside, when we turn from the world to God and so to speak lift ourselves up from that which is lowest, we must pass through the self; and thus, when we withdraw from the outer things which are transitory, it is as if we were riding the waves, till we reach the calm that is within us.

## 12

### Meditation, Contemplation, and Spiritual Fire

*In Ecclesiasten, Homilia I*

"Meditation, Contemplation, and Spiritual Fire" is taken from a lecture on Eccl. 1:13. It gives what is believed to be the first accurate description of the various processes of the mind as it becomes aware of the reality of God. Hugh of St. Victor did not think of meditation and contemplation as two unrelated techniques of spirituality. He believed that meditation ought to end in contemplation. Note the master touch in developing the analogy of the fire, inspired by Scripture ("I am come to send fire on the earth," Luke 12:49) and used consistently by mystics of all times from John of the Cross to Boehme and Pascal.

**T**HE RATIONAL soul has three modes of vision, namely cogitation, meditation, and contemplation. There is cogitation when the mind is temporarily affected by the pattern of

things, as the reality itself is made present to the soul at once through its image, whether it enter by way of the senses, or be drawn from the memory. Meditation is a steady and thorough going over our cogitations, with an attempt at unfolding that which is involved, or at searching out that which is hidden. Contemplation is a penetrating, unfettered, and all-embracing gaze at the objects considered. . . . Hence, meditation is an inquisitive process of the mind, striving keenly to scrutinize what is obscure and to unwind what is intricate. Contemplation is that vital activity of the mind whereby all things are seen in the open and embraced in a clear vision. Thus, in some way, what meditation seeks, contemplation possesses. . . .

In the meditation, knowledge so to speak wrestles with ignorance, and the light of truth shines amidst the darkness of error. It is like a fire of green wood which at first does not catch easily; but if we blow heartily to kindle it, it starts to burn a little more lustily among the sticks; big puffs of black smoke rise up, and we still do not see much of a flame, as it flashes timidly only now and then; but little by little the fire gains strength, it absorbs all the moisture; the darkness recedes, and the fire blazes clear and bright. Now the flame is victorious; it leaps and crackles through the heaped up wood, it freely conquers all; it curls around the sticks, envelops them as in a caress, licks, burns and bursts; it has no rest until it breaks through the entire pile, as if drawing into itself everything it can find. When all that can burn has been consumed, and, losing its own nature, is transformed into the likeness and nature of the fire, then the struggle abates, the crackling subsides; flames cease to dart up from the glow; the wild and devouring fire has incorporated all the wood into itself, shall we say, by a friendly transmutation; there is a calm now, a peace and silence deep. At first, one saw a fire with flame and smoke, then a blazing fire without smoke, finally a glowing fire without flame nor smoke.

Now, our heart of flesh is indeed like green wood; it has not yet cast out the moisture of carnal concupiscence; if it catches

some spark of the fear or love of God, smoke rises up first, owing to the contrariety of evil desires and the disorder of passions; then the flame of love gives strength to the mind; it begins to burn more heartily and to shine brighter; soon darkness and disorder vanish, the mind is purified and the spirit opens itself to the contemplation of truth. Finally, after the heart has filled with a steady contemplation of truth, and when man, with all the power of his soul, has progressed till the very fountain of the supreme truth, then he becomes at once consumed with delight, and, being transformed into the glow of love, he rests more peacefully from all struggle and disturbance. In the beginning, man seeks advice amidst the perils of temptation; it is as if smoke were mixed with flames in his meditation. In a second stage, when the mind is pure and the heart open to the contemplation of truth, it is as if flames were blazing without smoke in incipient contemplation. In the third stage, since truth and perfect charity have been secured already, there remains nothing to do but seek the unique good, in a pure glow of love, and lovingly to respond in the deepest quiet and blessedness. Then the heart is completely transformed into the glowing fire of love, God is truly felt to be all in all, when He is inwardly received with such affection that the heart has nothing left of its own but Him alone.

**Francis of Assisi**  
**1181-1226**

**13**

## Canticle of the Sun

From the critical text of V. Branca  
Florence, 1950

This is my translation of the almost untranslatable "Canticle of the Sun," reminiscent of Daniel 3:52-90 (Sept.), but with fewer clichés. It sings the "brotherhood" of creatures, united in the praise of Him who creates and who saves.

Most High, Almighty, o good Lord,  
Thine is the praise, glory, and all benediction.  
To Thee alone, Most High, they do belong  
And no man is worthy to speak Thy Name.  
Be praised, o my Lord, with all Thy creatures,  
Especially my brother the lord Sun;  
He illuminates the day; through him Thou shinest upon us;  
He is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,  
And Thee, Most High, he does signify.  
Be praised, o my Lord, for sister Moon and the Stars;  
In the sky Thou hast formed them clear and precious and fair.  
Be praised, o my Lord, for brother Wind,  
And for the Air and the Clouds and the Serene and all  
kind of weather;  
Through them Thou givest sustenance to Thy creatures.  
Be praised, o my Lord, for sister Water;  
She is most helpful and humble and precious and pure.  
Be praised, o my Lord, for brother Fire;  
It is he who shines through the night;

Beautiful is he, and joyful and vigorous and strong.  
 Be praised, o my Lord, for our sister, mother Earth;  
 She sustains us, and she provides,  
 And brings forth diverse fruits with bright flowers and  
 grass.  
 Be praised, o my Lord, for those who forgive for Thy  
 love's sake,  
 And who bear infirmity and tribulation.  
 Blessed are those who shall endure in peace!  
 From Thee, Most High, they shall receive the crown.  
 Be praised, o my Lord, for our sister Death corporal;  
 From her no living man can escape.  
 Woe to them who die in mortal sin!  
 Blessed those who are found in Thy most holy Will,  
 For the second death can do them no harm.  
 Praise ye and bless my Lord,  
 Give thanks and serve Him with great humility.

## 14

## Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer

Latin text in *Opuscula S. P. Francisci*  
*Quaracchi, 1904*

This is a curious paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. Francis steps right in, without the pedantic considerations of the theologians regarding the number, order and division of the petitions. One may be startled at his comment on the "daily bread." This he begged from men, but while breaking it (if there was any to be broken) he remembered above all the words of his Lord, "I am the bread of life." Here was the bread he prayed for, and he never went hungry.

**M**ost holy *Our Father*: our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter.

*Who art in heaven*: in the angels and in the saints, enlightening them unto knowledge, for Thou, Lord, art light;

kindling them unto love, for Thou, Lord, art love; dwelling in them and fulfilling them unto blessedness, for Thou, Lord, art the supreme good, the eternal good, from Whom is all good, without Whom there is no good.

*Hallowed be Thy Name:* Let the knowledge of Thee be made bright in us, that we may learn what is the breadth of Thy benefits, the length of Thy promises, the height of Thy majesty, and the depth of Thy judgments.

*Thy kingdom come:* that Thou mayest reign in us through grace and make us come to thy kingdom, where there is a clear vision of Thee, a perfect love for Thee, a blessed fellowship with Thee, an everlasting fruition of Thee.

*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:* that we may love Thee with all our heart, by always remembering Thee; with all our soul, by always desiring Thee; with all our mind, by directing all our intentions to Thee and by seeking Thy honor in all things; with all our might, by spending all the strength and powers of our soul and body in the service of Thy love and nothing else; and that we may love our neighbors as ourselves, doing our utmost to draw all men to Thy love, rejoicing in the good of others as in our own, having compassion on them in adversity, and giving offense to no one.

*Give us today our daily bread:* that is, Thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the remembrance and understanding and worship of his love and of the things which He said, did, and suffered for us.

*And forgive us our debts:* by Thy ineffable mercy, in the power of the passion of Thy beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the merits and intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary and of all Thine elect.

*As we forgive our debtors:* and what we do not fully forgive, make us, o Lord, forgive in full, that we may truly love our enemies for Thy sake and make devout intercession for them with Thee; that we render not evil for evil, but that in Thee we strive to help all.

*And lead us not into temptation:* hidden or manifest, fugitive or persistent.

*But deliver us from evil:* past, present, and future. Amen!

## The Ninth Beatitude

*Fioretti*, Chap. 8  
Translated by T. W. ARNOLD

Taken from the *Fioretti*, "The Ninth Beatitude" is the most humorous, and probably the most effective, sermon ever preached on the Beatitude of those who are reviled on account of Christ. Francis did not care to reason out the paradox. This he left for the Doctors of his and other orders. They never succeeded.

WHENAS Saint Francis was going one day from Perugia to Saint Mary of the Angels with Brother Leo in the spring tide, and the very bitter cold grievously tormented him, he called to Brother Leo that was going on before and said thus: "Brother Leo, though the Brothers Minor throughout all the world were great ensamples of sanctity and true edifying, nathless write it down and take heed diligently that not therein is perfect joy." And going on a little further, Saint Francis called a second time: "O Brother Leo, albeit the Brothers Minor should give sight to the blind, make straight the crooked, cast out devils, make the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and (greater still) should raise them that have been dead a four days' space, write that not therein is perfect joy." And going on a little, he cried aloud: "O Brother Leo, if the Brother Minor should know all tongues and all sciences and all the Scriptures, so that he could prophesy and reveal not only things to come but also the secrets of consciences and souls, write that not therein is perfect joy." Going on yet a little further, Saint Francis called aloud once more: "O Brother Leo, thou little sheep of God, albeit the

Brother Minor should speak with the tongue of angels, and know the courses of the stars and the virtues of herbs; and though all the treasures of the earth were revealed unto him and he understood the virtues of birds, and of fishes, and of stones, and of roots, and of waters, write that not therein is perfect joy." And going on a little further, Saint Francis cried aloud: "O Brother Leo, albeit the Brother Minor could preach so well as to turn all the infidels to the faith of Christ, write that not therein is perfect joy." And this manner of speech continuing for full two miles, Brother Leo with much marvel besought him, saying: "Father, I pray thee in the name of God that thou tell me, wherein is perfect joy." And Saint Francis thus made answer: "When we come to Saint Mary of the Angels, all soaked as we are with rain and numbed with cold and besmirched with mud and tormented with hunger, and knock at the door; and the porter comes in anger and says: 'Who are ye?' and we say: 'We be two of your brethren'; and he says, 'Ye be no true men; nay, ye be two rogues that gad about deceiving the world and robbing the alms of the poor; get ye gone': and thereat he shuts to the door and makes us stand without in the snow and the rain, cold and a-hungered, till night-fall; if therewithal we patiently endure such wrong and such cruelty and such rebuffs without being disquieted and without murmuring against him; and with humbleness and charity bethink us that this porter knows us full well and that God makes him to speak against us; O Brother Leo, write that therein is perfect joy. And if we be instant in knocking and he come out full of wrath and drive us away as importunate knaves, with insults and buffetings, saying: 'Get ye gone hence, vilest of thieves, begone to the alms-house, for here ye shall find nor food nor lodging'; if we suffer this with patience and with gladness and with love, O Brother Leo, write that therein is perfect joy. And if we still constrained by hunger, cold and night, knock again and shout and with much weeping pray him for the love of God that he will but open and let us in; and he yet more enraged should say: 'These be importunate knaves, I will pay them as they deserve,' and

should rush out with a knotty stick and taking us by the hood, throws us upon the ground and send us rolling in the snow and beat us with all the knots of that stick: if with patience and with gladness we suffer all these things, thinking on the pains of the blessed Christ, the which we ought to suffer for the love of Him: O Brother Leo, write that here and therein is perfect joy: then hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Brother Leo: Above all graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, that Christ granteth to His beloved, is to overcome oneself, and willingly for the love of Christ endure pains and insults and shame and want: inasmuch as in all other gifts of God we may not glory, sith they are not ours but God's; whence saith the Apostle: What hast thou that thou hast not received it of God? And if thou hast received it from Him, wherefore boastest thou thyself as if thou hadst it of thyself? (1 Cor. 4:7) But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may boast, sith this is ours; and therefore saith the Apostle, I would not that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

Bonaventura  
1221-1274

16

## Blindness Healed

*The Mind's Road to God*, Chap. 2  
Translated by G. Boas

This piece from *The Mind's Road to God* registers the fact that man is not able to overcome his spiritual blindness merely by a great exertion of his mind. God's splendor lies open before Christ alone; and only those persons who are united with Christ in faith and hope and love can share in the vision. Faith, hope, and love are the spiritual senses which restore man's power to see and taste and touch the reality of God.

IT SEEMS amazing, when it is so clear that God is so near to our minds, that there are so few who see the First Principle in themselves. But the reason is close at hand. For the human mind, distracted by cares, does not enter into itself through memory; obscured by phantasms, it does not return into itself through intelligence; allured by concupiscence, it never returns to itself through the desire for inner sweetness and spiritual gladness. Thus, lying totally in this sensible world, it cannot return to itself as to the image of God.

And since, when anyone lies fallen, he must remain there prostrate unless someone give a helping hand . . . , our soul has not been able to be raised perfectly from the things of sense to an intuition of itself and of the eternal truth in itself unless the truth, having assumed human form in Christ, should make itself into a ladder, repairing the first ladder which was broken in Adam.

Therefore, however much anyone is illuminated only by the light of nature and of acquired science, he cannot enter into himself that he may delight in the Lord in himself, unless Christ be his mediator, who says, "I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures" (John 10:9). We do not, however, approach this door unless we believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him. It is therefore necessary, if we wish to enter into the fruition of truth as into a Paradise, that we enter through the faith, hope, and charity of the mediator between God and man, Jesus-Christ, who is as the tree of life in the middle of Paradise.

The image of our mind must therefore be clothed also in the three theological virtues by which the soul is purified, illuminated, and perfected; and thus the image is repaired and is made like the heavenly Jerusalem and part of the Church militant, which, according to the Apostle, is the child of the heavenly Jerusalem. For he says: "But that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother" (Gal. 4:26). Therefore, the soul which believes in, hopes in, and loves Jesus Christ, who is the Word incarnate, uncreated, and spirated, that is, the way and the truth and the life, when by faith he believes in Christ as in the uncreated Word, which is the Word and the splendor of the Father, he recovers spiritual hearing and vision: hearing to receive the lessons of Christ, vision to look upon the splendor of His light. When, however, he yearns with hope to receive the spirated Word, through desire and affection he recovers spiritual olfaction. When he embraces the incarnate Word in charity, as one receiving from Him delight and passing into Him through ecstatic love, he recovers taste and touch.

## Passage Beyond Knowledge

*The Mind's Road to God*, Chap. 7  
Translated by G. BOAS

"Passage Beyond Knowledge" was written on the mountain of La Verna, where Francis of Assisi had been transfigured into the Crucified. This had been Francis' "Passover," his passing beyond the region of human predicaments. Here Bonaventura applies this analogy to the condition of those who, like Francis, have shared through faith and love in the death of Christ and are risen to a new life—even on this side of eternity.

**H**E WHO with full face looks to Christ suspended on the cross in faith, hope, and charity, in devotion, wonder, exultation, appreciation, praise, and jubilation, makes a "Passover," that is, a passage with Him, that he may pass over the Red Sea by the staff of the cross from Egypt into the desert, where he may taste the hidden manna and with Christ may rest in the tomb as if outwardly dead, yet knowing, as far as possible in our earthly condition, what was said on the cross to the thief cleaving to Christ: "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)....

In this passage, if it is perfect, all intellectual operations should be abandoned, and the whole height of our affection should be transferred and transformed into God. This, however, is mystical and most secret, which "no man knows but he that has received it" (Apoc. 2:17), nor does he receive it unless he desire it; nor does he desire it unless the fire of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sent to earth, has inflamed his marrow. And therefore the Apostle says that this mystic wisdom is revealed through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10 ff.).

Since, therefore, nature is powerless in this matter and industry but slightly able, little should be given to inquiry but much to unction, little to the tongue but much to inner joy, little to the word and to writings and all to the gift of God, that is, to the Holy Spirit, little or nothing to creation and all to the creative essence, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit....

If you should ask how these things come about, question grace, not instruction; desire, not intellect; the cry of prayer, not pursuit of study; the spouse, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the wholly flaming fire which will bear you aloft to God with fullest unction and burning affection.

Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

18

## Of True Devotion

*Summa Theologica*

IIa IIae, q. 82, Art. 1,3,4

Translated by members of the English Province O.P.

This selection from *Summa Theologica* is a relatively autonomous statement on the nature, motives and fruits of *devotion*, which is not to be confused with *devotions* in the plural, and which Aquinas defines as the "total surrender of self to the service of God."

"DEVOTION" is derived from "devote"; wherefore those persons are said to be devout who, in a way, devote themselves to God, so as to subject themselves wholly to Him. Hence in olden times among the heathen a devotee was one who vowed to his idols to suffer death for the safety of his army, as T. Livy relates of the two Decii. Hence devotion is apparently nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God. Wherefore it is written that "the multitude of the children of Israel . . . offered first-fruits to the Lord with a most ready and devout mind" (Ex. 35:20-21, Vulg.). . . .

The extrinsic and chief cause of devotion is God, of whom Ambrose, commenting on Luke 9:55, "And turning He re-

buked them" etc., says that "God calls whom He thinks worthy, and whom He wills He make religious: the profane Samaritans, had He so willed, He would have made devout." But the intrinsic cause on our part must needs be meditation or contemplation. For it was stated above that devotion is an act of the will to the effect that man surrender himself readily to the service of God. Now every act of the will proceeds from some consideration, since the object of the will is a good understood. Wherefore Augustine says that "the will arises from the intelligence" (*De Trinitate*, IX:12; XV:23). Consequently meditation must needs be the cause of devotion, in so far as through meditation man conceives the thought of surrendering himself to God's service. Indeed a twofold consideration leads him thereto. The one is the consideration of God's goodness and loving-kindness, according to Ps. 73:28 (Vulg. 72:28), "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God," and this consideration wakens love which is the proximate cause of devotion. The other consideration is that of man's own shortcoming, on account of which he needs to lean on God, according to Ps. 121:1-2, "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me: my help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth," and this consideration shuts out presumption whereby man is hindered from submitting to God, because he leans on His strength. . . .

The direct and principal effect of devotion is the spiritual joy of the mind, though sorrow is its secondary and indirect effect. For it has been stated that devotion is caused by a two-fold consideration: chiefly by the consideration of God's goodness, because this consideration belongs to the term, as it were, of the movement of the will in surrendering itself to God, and the direct result of this consideration is joy, according to Ps. 77:4 (Vulg. 76.4), "I remembered God, and was delighted," but accidentally this consideration causes a certain sorrow in those who do not yet enjoy God fully, according to Ps. 42:2-3, "My soul has thirsted after the strong living God" and afterwards it goes on "My tears have been my bread" etc. Sec-

ondarily devotion is caused, as stated in the preceding article, by the consideration of one's own failings; for this consideration pertains to the term from which man withdraws by the movement of his devout will, namely, that he should not be self-confident but subject himself to God. This consideration has an opposite tendency to the first: for it is of a nature to cause sorrow directly (when one thinks over one's own failings), and joy accidentally, namely, through hope of the divine assistance.

## 19

## Of Prayer: Public and Private

*Summa Theologica*

IIa IIae, q. 83, art. 12

Translated by members of the English Province O.P.

This deals with a very practical issue—the mutual relationship of private prayer and common prayer, of the prayer "in the closet" and the prayer of God's people, of the secret ascension of the soul and the "divine task" of liturgical worship.

**P**RAYER is twofold, common and individual. Common prayer is that which is offered to God by the ministers of the Church representing the body of the faithful: wherefore suchlike prayer should come to the knowledge of the whole people for whom it is offered: and this would not be possible unless it were vocal prayer. Therefore it is reasonably ordained that the ministers of the Church should say these prayers even in a loud voice, so that they may come to the knowledge of all.

On the other hand individual prayer is that which is offered by any single person, whether he pray for himself or for others;

and it is not essential to such a prayer as this that it be vocal. And yet the voice is employed in suchlike prayers for three reasons. First, in order to excite interior devotion, whereby the mind of the person praying is raised to God, because by means of external signs, whether of words or of deeds, the human mind is moved as regards apprehension and consequently also as regards the affections. Hence Augustine says to Proba that "by means of words and other signs we arouse ourselves more sharply to an increase of holy desires" (*Epist. CXXX, 9*). Hence then alone should we use words and suchlike signs when they help to excite the mind internally. But if they distract or in any way impede the mind we should abstain from them; and this happens chiefly to those whose mind is sufficiently prepared for devotion without having recourse to those signs. Wherefore the Psalmist says: "My heart has said to Thee, my face has sought Thee" (Ps. 27:8), and we read of Anna that "she spoke in her heart" (1 Sam. 1:13). Secondly, the voice is used in praying as though to pay a debt, so that man may serve God with all that he has from God, that is to say, not only with his mind, but also with his body: and this applies to prayer considered especially as satisfactory. Hence it is written: "Take away all iniquity, and receive the good: and we will render the calves of our lips" (Hos. 14:2). Thirdly, we have recourse to vocal prayer through a certain overflow from the soul into the body, through excess of feeling, according to Ps. 16:9, "My heart has been glad, and my tongue has rejoiced."

## The Late Medieval Period

THE PHENOMENAL growth of the Church during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had reached its peak. There was nothing more or nothing greater to be expected from the culture and the spirit of the Middle Ages. Alarming symptoms were beginning to appear, a general sclerosis of institutions and doctrines. Christianity had become Christendom. A faith had become a world organization. The Church was being taken for granted as a historical structure, but few were concerned with its spiritual origin and nature. Dignitaries bickered about who should run what.

The schools, which once had nurtured what had undoubtedly been a great Christian culture, were busy arguing the fine points of embalmed ideologies without relation to the real concerns of life. Personal religion was shrinking to the size of a clever device for warding off the brimstone of divine punishments. Religious practice was being reduced to mere externals, and the pageant of liturgy "in Latin and brocade" no longer satisfied the hidden hunger of the masses. Theatrical performances by the brotherhoods of mystery players still tried to bring some edification, to stir fleeting emotions. But they could not possibly lay hold of the whole of man, for when life is at stake it is not enough to be a spectator; one has to be part of the cast.

There was a universal and urgent need for something deeper than emotions, doctrines, codes of ethics or even the anxiety of

men intermittently concerned with their final destination, when it looked as if life would fail them. People needed to be made aware of the real nature of Christian life, of its demands and resources. Inspired men sounded the call, bidding their contemporaries to rediscover for themselves the forgotten ways of the Spirit and the secret depths of their Christian vocations. The call was heeded. During the entire course of the fourteenth century, a wave of mysticism swept Germany, the Rhineland, the Netherlands and Belgium. Among the leaders, friars from the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) ministered primarily to the nuns and to companies of lay men and women who placed themselves under their direction. On the lower Rhine and in Flanders, newly formed communities of priests and semimonastic brotherhoods upheld the principles of the new devotion against the superficiality of ecclesiastical routine and the enthusiasm of erratic dreamers.

The German (and Flemish) mystics of the fourteenth century inherited from the schoolmen the Augustinian thesis of God's image in the soul. It had been a valuable analogy; they made it a quasi-dogma. They inherited also the theory of the three "hierarchic" stages in the development of spiritual life. But their devotion to Dionysian speculation went one step further. Of course they repudiated its implicit pantheism; they never ceased to affirm, if not the tension, at least the contrast between God and creature, even in the state of "union"—a few overstatements of Meister Eckhart notwithstanding. Yet their fondness for the negative approach of Dionysian mysticism, their unconditional rejection of images and symbols as utterly inadequate to express the deity, and their insistence that the highest union of the soul with God transcends the operation of faith—and belongs, not in the order of psychological realities, but in the order of being—made them suspect in the eyes of classical theologians.

If we are willing to make a generous allowance for unwarranted speculation, we still may benefit by the records of these mystics' experiences. They are rich in vivid and valid psychological observations, the like of which are seldom to be

found in the pedestrian developments of didactic theology, Catholic or Protestant.

Eckhart, the father of German mysticism, was born ca. 1260 at Hochheim near Gotha in Thuringia. Of his youth we know very little, except that he joined the Dominican order at Erfurt and completed the prescribed course of theological studies presumably in Cologne. Sometime after 1290 he was elected Prior of the convent of Erfurt. In 1300 he was sent to Paris for graduate studies, and he obtained the degree of Master in Sacred Theology. In 1303 he was made Prior Provincial of Saxony, and in 1307 he was commissioned to visit and reform the houses of the order in Bohemia. From 1311 onward Meister Eckhart occupied a chair of theology at the University of Paris, spent some time preaching and writing at Strasbourg, and was called to Cologne, where he taught in the chair made famous by Albertus Magnus. There he was accused of heresy by the archbishop. The case was brought before the Inquisition, and in 1327 several excerpts from his writings were censured as pantheistic. Eckhart died shortly thereafter, and the condemnation of his doctrine was confirmed by Pope John XXII in 1329.

The spiritual doctrine of this controversial figure is in sharp reaction against the superficiality and formalism of the Christianity of his time. He sees men as called to meet God in the secret recesses of their souls. The union of the soul with God is possible even in this life, if only man makes himself ready for the inward quest. The spiritual journey is described in terms of Dionysian speculation, but unfortunately the philosophy underlying Eckhart's mystical theory, the audacity of his similes and his occasional reckless transposition of certain themes of the fourth Gospel exposed him to misunderstanding, misquotation and misuse.

Johann Tauler was born ca. 1290, presumably in Strasbourg, where he joined the Dominican order in his adolescent years. He studied in Strasbourg and Cologne, but he was not des-

tined for an academic career. Instead, he devoted himself to preaching and spiritual counseling. It is quite possible, but not certain, that he came to know Meister Eckhart personally. Following a sentence of interdict pronounced against the territory of Strasbourg by Pope John XXII in the time of his conflict with Louis the Bavarian—a self-appointed candidate to the imperial throne—Tauler left for Basel, where he sojourned from 1339 to 1347 and became adviser to several nunneries and groups of so-called *Gottesfreunden* or "Friends of God." Back in Strasbourg, he began again to expound his doctrine from the pulpit, and he continued in his activities in spiritual circles. Tauler died in 1361 and was buried in his convent's church—today the Protestant church of Saint Pierre le Vieux, where his tombstone can be seen.

Tauler's doctrine is closely related to that of Eckhart. Speculation, however, plays a less important part; similes and dogmatic statements are weighed with great care, to forestall the heretical implications which enthusiastic disciples of Eckhart had drawn from their master's principles. Tauler believes in the importance of passing beyond finite images and man-made ideas of God, but what he demands above all is the surrendering of the will and the purification of all human desires and motives. The purification of motives must go on and on and should not be regarded merely as the first rung of the spiritual ladder.

There is as yet no critical edition of Tauler's writings. A great many sermons attributed to him are certainly spurious. The so-called "Institutes" are the work of a disciple, as is also the allegedly autobiographical fragment describing his "conversion."

Heinrich Seuse was born at Konstanz in 1295, the scion of the noble Swabian family von Berg, but he took his mother's name—Sus, or Seuse; or, in the latinized form, Suso. At the age of thirteen he entered the Dominican convent of Konstanz, picturesquely located on an island of the Rhine. His spiritual life during his early years in religion seems to have

been very superficial until he experienced a radical conversion at the age of eighteen. He gave himself to ascetic practices which, even in an age inclined to extremes, were deemed excessive. He went so far as to engrave on his breast, with the point of a stiletto, the monogram of Christ. In 1324 he was sent to Cologne, where he studied under Eckhart. In 1327 he was appointed lecturer in the convent of Konstanz, but he did not continue very long in this office, and he became an itinerant preacher and spiritual counselor. In this capacity, he visited the Dominican nunneries of the upper Rhine and of Switzerland, and addressed miscellaneous groups of laymen. This ministry was not without risks; once he barely escaped death at the hands of irate peasants who mistook him for a sorcerer and poisoner of wells; on the other hand, his easy manners alarmed his superiors, and he had to defend himself against rather obviously unfounded charges of immorality. In 1348 he was assigned to the convent of Ulm, where he died in 1366.

Suso is the minstrel of German mysticism. While accepting—and eventually defending—the substance of Eckhart's doctrine, he personally refrains from theorizing. Rather he relates experiences, describes phenomena and exhorts men and women to open their souls to the divine influence. His lyrical accents do not preclude an occasional note of irony, quite perceptible in the autobiographical fragments. He conceives of the life and death of Christ—the "Eternal Wisdom"—as a pedagogy of love. This is a theme dear to Suso, who developed it at length in the *Büchlein der Ewigen Weisheit* and the *Hortologium Sapientiae*.

Problems of authenticity, with regard to Suso's works, are eased by the fact that, in his later years, he prepared an official edition of his principal writings, the so-called *Exemplar*, probably in order to prevent quacks from circulating their theories under his name.

The formation of spiritual "cells" in the bosom of the Church, and the rise of dissident sects in the districts of the lower Rhine and in the Belgian provinces followed approxi-

mately the same pattern as in Germany. However, the orders of friars took a lesser part in the movement, and the initiative of a spiritual revival in the Church was taken by new religious organisms. In order to illustrate this, we have singled out two great figures from many others, Ruysbroeck and Thomas a Kempis.

Jan van Ruysbroeck—named for his birthplace, Ruysbroeck on the Senne, in the vicinity of Brussels—was born in 1293 of poor parents. One of their relatives, Jan Hinckaert, a chaplain at the collegiate church of Saint Gudula, provided for his education in the Latin schools at Brussels. It is possible that he studied also at Cologne. At any rate he was strongly influenced by the doctrine of Eckhart. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1317, he obtained a chaplaincy at Saint Gudula and began publicly to oppose the "Brethren of the Free Spirit," who were stirred up by a woman of dubious reputation named Bloemardine and who advocated the greatest license under pretense of Christian liberty. In 1343 Ruysbroeck, Hinckaert and a fellow chaplain, Coudenberg, repaired to the hermitage of Groenendaal (le Vau-vert) near Brussels, and shortly thereafter they adopted the rule of Saint Augustine and the habit of Regular Canons. It is said that Tauler visited the priory in 1350. Another visitor was Geert de Groote, the founder of the "Brotherhood of the Common Life." Ruysbroeck died at Groenendaal in 1381.

Ruysbroeck wrote several devotional treatises in the Flemish language. One of them, *The adornment of spiritual marriage*, is best known to English readers, even though it is by no means the most interesting. Ruysbroeck's systematic exposition of the principles of spiritual life is based on personal experience, and on the Augustinian doctrine of God's image in the human soul—the innermost "part" of which is like a mirror, made only to reflect God's likeness. God makes himself known to the "simple eye," which He has purified and empowered with His grace. The various degrees of purification and illumination of souls by the Holy Spirit constitute a hierarchy of friends of God, in true Dionysian fashion. At the top of the

hierarchy are those who have attained to union with the "Superessence," in the luminous obscurity of "unknowledge"—a terminology which theologians like Gerson censured sharply.

It is generally accepted that Thomas Hämmerlein, better known as Thomas a Kempis, is the author of the *Imitation of Christ*. He was born in 1380 at Kempen on the Rhine, hence his Latin surname. He was educated in the schools at Deventer, which were conducted by the "Brethren of the Common Life" (whose founder, Geert de Groote, had been influenced by Ruysbroeck). We find him later in the community of the Augustinian canons of Mount Saint Agnes, near Zwolle, an offshoot of the original brotherhood. Ordained to the priesthood in 1413, and made superior in 1429, he died in 1471. His life was a perfectly uneventful one, spent in ministering to his fellow canons, writing on devotional subjects, copying manuscripts in the *scriptorium* and generally going through the common exercises of monastic piety.

The title of his main work is taken from the heading of its first chapter: "Of the Imitation of Christ, and of Contempt of the World and All Its Vanities." In fact, it is a practical treatise of spiritual life, written primarily for persons living in religious communities. The author does not build systems; he abhors theories; he distrusts theological and philosophical speculations. Instead he proceeds by way of maxims and direct suggestions, which the rhythmic prose of the Latin original, perceptible even in translation, makes all the more convincing.

The spirituality of the Latin countries toward the end of the Middle Ages did not follow the consistent pattern which we have observed in the Germanic area. Dionysian mysticism had little appeal for extrovert Frenchmen. Indeed, their devotional literature in the age of the Great Schism and of the Hundred Years' War lacked in abundance and often in originality.

Among the few great theologians of the Sorbonne during that period, we have Jean le Charlier, surnamed Gerson for

the hamlet in the French Ardennes where he was born in 1363. He was the son of peasants and received his first education in the schools of the archbishopric at Reims. When he attained the age of fourteen, he went to Paris to study the arts and theology at the College of Navarre. He held various offices in the University and succeeded his teacher Pierre d' Ailly as chancellor in 1395. He retained this title to the end of his life, although he had to flee from Paris for safety in 1418—after his denunciation of political murders committed by John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy, whose supporters continued to rule the city after the death of the duke. Gerson died at Lyons in 1429.

Gerson's theology bears the mark of his age. The philosophical presuppositions of the older schoolmen had been seriously challenged and could no longer be regarded as a suitable foundation for theology. Accordingly, theology as a science was seen as resting exclusively on the authority of the Church vested in the doctrinal pronouncements of the doctors and the councils, and calling for a voluntary acceptance rather than for a free investigation by minds anxious to "understand" the faith. The spiritual doctrine of Gerson has little originality, except for its effective balancing of his extenuated brand of "scholastic" or "literary" theology. It stresses the affective aspects of Christian faith and steers away from the extreme forms of Dionysian speculation.

In Italy, fierce rivalries between the medieval and early Renaissance city states made for regionalism in devotion as well as in politics. Each religious family kept its doctrinal traditions with a devotion not exempt from fanaticism. Each province, each town, each faction blindly worshiped its local saint, living or dead, and claimed to possess infallible recipes for the achievement of holiness . . . for those few who would resort to them. The age abounded in "characters," and the most heroic practice of Christian perfection could be found next door to the most incredible charlatanism.

Catherine of Siena was born in 1347 in the city for which

she was surnamed. She was the twenty-third child of Giacomo Benincasa—a dyer of cloth by trade—and his wife Lapa. When a little child, Catherine took to intense devotional and ascetic practices, which seemed strange in her run-of-the-mill Italian Catholic family. At the age of sixteen, she joined the so-called "Sisters of Penance of St. Dominic," a branch of the Third Order, whose members lived "in the world" under the care of Dominican priests appointed as their confessors and spiritual directors. Thus, Catherine came under the influence of Fra Raymundo di Capua, whom she fervently heeded, and whom she upbraided just as fervently for not practicing with a will what he recommended to others. Her indomitable strength of will she applied to the uprooting of self-love in all its manifestations. The combination of her absolute devotion and of her extreme sensibility resulted in psychic manifestations often to be observed in the life of the mystics, although they do not belong to the essence of mysticism. She "saw" Christ, "conversed" with Him, and the marks of His Passion were mysteriously printed on her hands and feet and side. She begged that these marks would remain invisible to human eyes, and her prayer was granted. Her principal writing, the *Dialogue*, she dictated to her secretaries while she was in a state of rapture—a phenomenon which compares with the automatic writing of Jacob Boehme. She never considered that these "favors" were granted to her for her sake, but rather because of a divine mission, to which she applied herself with extraordinary cleverness and boldness: The Church was to be reformed in its corporate life as well as in the personal life of its members. This is the leitmotiv of her letters to private individuals, Church dignitaries, and to Pope Benedict XI (her "sweet Babbo"). She urged him to return from Avignon to Rome, which he did in 1377, and to live in conformity with his calling as a pastor. It ought to be added here that, whereas earnest Christians could not but agree as to the spiritual goal, still they disagreed sharply as to the political means. Thus, after the death of Benedict in 1378, Catherine supported his successor in Rome, Urban VI, while Vincent Ferrer—a con-

temporary of Catherine, who was also a Dominican and who, like her, was canonized by the Roman Church—upheld the claims of Clement VII, Urban's rival in Avignon. Catherine died in 1380.

The spirituality of Catherine is intensely practical. The Dionysian influence is strictly limited to those elements already incorporated in the Thomist synthesis, which is Catherine's theological frame of reference. Her devotion is focused on Christ, not the Christ of Suso, a personification of God's Eternal Wisdom, but the Christ of the Epistle to the Hebrews, our High Priest, who entered the "holy place by his own blood" and spanned the chasm between sinners and God; hence, in the *Dialogue*, one finds the ever recurrent image of the bridge, which she developed most freely as an illustration of our spiritual journey.

We close our survey of Pre-Reformation authors with the tragic figure of Girolamo Savonarola. At first sight he is an extrovert, engaged in the religious, ideological and political battles of his age, to the "point of no return." But this overflow of activity, which finally was the cause of his undoing, concealed depths of faith and love and desire that reached to the very juncture of body and soul. The tragic in his case was a lack of adequate connections between the sources of his energy and the external deeds in which he spent and lost himself.

He was born at Ferrara in 1452. While preparing himself to become a physician, he was denied the hand of a local heiress whom he loved passionately. Heartbroken, he fled his native city and entered the Dominican order at Bologna in 1475. After the completion of the prescribed course of study, he was sent to Ferrara, where he met with little success as a preacher. In 1489 he transferred to Florence, and was elected Prior of the convent of San Marco in 1491. His prophetic appeals to repentance and to religious and civic regeneration were heeded at first with wild enthusiasm. After the expulsion of the Medicis by the French, he was requested by the seigniory to

propose a new constitution for the city, which he then began to govern as a dictator, in the absolute conviction that he was divinely appointed to establish God's rule over the Florentines. In 1497 he came into conflict with Pope Alexander VI on matters of Italian politics. The hostility of those of Florence who bore impatiently his reforms, joined with the opposition of the Franciscans of the convent of Santa Croce, brought about his downfall. After he was forbidden by the seigniory to justify his claims by submitting to an ordeal by fire, Fra Girolamo was charged with imposture and rebellion, sentenced to death, hanged, his body burned and his ashes cast into the river Arno on May 23, 1498.

Savonarola was never a great scholar. His was the common theology of the Dominican order, in which the influence of Aquinas was beginning to prevail over old-fashioned Augustinism. But he had fed upon the Bible to such an extent that he had appropriated the substance and the very style of the Prophets and of the Apocalypse.

Eckhart  
ca. 1260-1327

20

## Birth of the Word

*From a sermon on Luke 10:38*

This excerpt from a sermon by Eckhart offers an outstanding example of mystical speculation. God's word, says Eckhart, is begotten ceaselessly in the center of the human soul, once the soul has been emptied of everything finite and stands totally passive before God. The Word of God in us is "the very same Son" eternally begotten of the Father and made flesh for us. Under the unbearable excess of this statement is hidden the vital truth that if Christ is not *in us*, then Christ is *not ours*; that Christ is known only to those who truly are His own, and not to those who have merely read or heard His story.

I SAID time and again that there is a power in the soul, which neither time nor flesh can touch. It flows out of the Spirit and abides in the Spirit, and is spiritual through and through. In this power, God is (like a plant) green and flowering, in all the joy and all the glory of His own self. Here also is joy so hearty and so inconceivably great, that no one can fully tell; for here the Eternal Father begets His Eternal Son without

ceasing, so that this power of the soul brings forth the Father's Son and indeed is being born as the very same Son, by the sole might of the Father. . . .

I said at times that there is a power in (man's) spirit, which alone is free. At times I said it was a recess in the spirit. At times I said it was a light in the spirit. At times I said it was a spark. But now I say: it is neither this nor that. Yet it is a "something," which is higher above this or that, than heavens are above the earth. This is why I call it now in a more noble way than I ever did—but it gives the lie to "noble" and to "way," being above such notions. It is free from all names, bare from all forms, altogether pure and free as God is pure and free in Himself. It is indeed one and simple as God is one and simple, so that one cannot possibly ever catch a glimpse of it.

In this same power of which I have already spoken, God is (as a plant) green and flowering in all his deity, and the spirit is in God. In this same power the Father begets his only Son as truly as in Himself, for He truly lives in this power. The spirit (of man) together with the Father bring forth the only begotten Son, aye, the spirit is being born as the same Son, for in this light, he is the Son and the Truth. Could you only feel with my heart, you would understand what I say, for it is true, and Truth itself says it.

## 21

### Disinterestedness

*From a sermon on Matt. 21:12*

It would be a mistake to believe that Eckhart's spiritual climate is one of unbridled speculation. "Disinterestedness" is a blast at the mercenary motive of otherwise decent people who establish their relationship to God on a business basis. Eckhart says,

"They cheat themselves out of the bargain," for the Christian seeks not his own. The entire passage throws light on less sober statements of the doctrine of pure love. Eckhart did not always refrain from exaggeration—a common vice among preachers—and this may well account for the accusation of "quietism" which was brought against him.

**W**E READ in the Gospel that our Lord went into the Temple and began to cast out all them that bought and sold, and he said to those who had pigeons on sale: "Off with that! Take that away!" (Matt. 21:12).... The Temple in which God wants to reign by the power of his will, that is the soul of man.... God wants this Temple to be empty, that there may be nothing inside but Himself alone....

Now then consider: Who were the people who bought and sold there, and who are they still? Mark me well: I am not preaching on any other people than the good ones. Even so, I will show for this time who the merchants were, and still are, who thus bought and sold, those whom our Lord cast out and drove forth. And he does still the same to all those who buy and sell in this Temple; he would not leave a single one in there. See, the merchants are all those who are on their guards against gross sinning, who would like to be good people, and who do their good works to the glory of God, such as fasts, vigils, prayers and what not, all good works indeed; yet they do them in the hope that our Lord shall give them something in return, or that He shall do unto them as they wish. All these are merchants. That is very plain to see, for they mean to give one thing for another and so to bargain with our Lord. And yet they cheat themselves out of that bargain. For all they have and all they can achieve, even if they would spend themselves altogether for God, still God would not be obliged to give or to do anything out of indebtedness, apart from his will to do it freely and graciously.... God seeks not His own. In all His deeds He is unbound and free, and He acts out of pure love. So also the man who is united with God: he stands unbound and

free in all his works, doing them for the sole glory of God, and seeking not his own; and it is God who works in him.

I have told also how our Lord said to the people who had pigeons on sale in the Temple: "Off with that! Take that away!" Those people He did not drive forth, nor did He upbraid them harshly, but He said rather kindly: "Now you take that away!" as if He meant to say: This really is not sin; yet it builds up a hindrance to sheer truth. Such people are all good folk, who do their works solely for God's sake and seek no advantage thereby; yet they work while being (still engrossed) in ownership, in matters of time and number, of before and after. Because of this manner of works, they are hindered from achieving the most excellent degree of truth, namely that they ought to be free and unbound, as our Lord Jesus Christ is free and unbound.

## 22

### Self-Will *Collationes, Chap. 3*

This passage on "Self-Will" illustrates the thesis that neither solitude nor cloister life nor asceticism nor so-called "evangelical poverty" nor sundry other practices are of any help, as long as man keeps on nursing his "self-will" instead of surrendering it to God. So long as man nourishes his "self-will," a sinful self remains entrenched precisely where the union of God with the soul is to be consummated.

**P**EOPLE say: "Alas, sir, I wish I stood as well with God, had as much piety, and were as much at peace with God as other people. If only I could be like this, or as poor as that!" or, "It won't ever be right with me till I am here or there, and

do this or that; I must get away, and live in a cell, or in a cloister."

Of a truth 'tis you alone who are to blame and nothing else; 'tis nothing but self-will. Perhaps you don't know it, or you don't believe so, yet there is no restlessness in you that does not arise out of self-will, whether you are aware of it or unaware. Now we had figured it out, that man ought to flee this thing and seek that thing, to wit, places, people, ways, aims and works. Yet ways and things are not to blame for hindering you; 'tis your self in things that hinders you, by cleaving to things inordinately.

Start, then, from where you are, and leave your own self. Truly, if you do not flee your own self first, wherever it is you flee, you will find there obstacles and restlessness, be it where it may. People who seek peace in outward things, whether in places, ways, persons, works, or in flight, in poverty and abasement, or anything else however big it looks, still all they try to do is nothing, and there is no peace. They seek all amiss, who seek peace that way. The further they go out, the less will they find what they are after. They go like one who has missed his way; the further he goes, the more he strays. What, then, should one do? He should leave himself first, and so he will have left all things. Truly a man may leave a kingdom, even the whole world; and yet, if he still clings to himself, he has not left anything. But if a man leaves his own self, no matter what he keeps, be it riches or honours or what not, then he will have left all things.

St. Jerome commenting on the words of Peter, "See, Lord, we have left all things" (Matt. 19:27), when he had not left more than a shabby net and his boat—St. Jerome says: He who leaves a little thing willingly, he does not leave only that, but he leaves all that worldly people seek to gain, aye, and that which they may desire. For he who leaves his will, he who leaves his own self, he has left all things as truly as if they had been his freehold and as if he had possessed them with full power. What you do not desire, that you have all given up and left for God's sake. This is why our Lord said: "Blessed are the

poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), meaning "those devoid of self-will," and this, no one may doubt. Had there been a better way, our Lord would have taught us, even as when He said: "He who will come after me, let him first deny himself" (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23); it all comes down to this. Watch yourself then, and wherever you find your self, there leave your self; for this is by far the best.

Tauler  
*ca. 1290-1361*

23

## Growth Amidst Differences

*From a sermon on John 12:26*

"Growth Amidst Differences" plays on the Augustinian theme of the "like" and the "unlike." What is "like" unto God is "unlike" to the world. If we should choose to become "like" unto God, then we must become "unlike" to the world. It happens that the very tension between both is the best condition of our spiritual progress. "Man," says Tauler, "thrives better amidst differences," than when everything around him looks friendly and favorable.

WHEN man lays hold of God, when he draws God to himself in a common presence, he feels well satisfied with little things, for to him all things are good and enough. Places, and works, and people are to him as alien. When man possesses God in this manner, he makes better progress and attains to virtue sooner than if all things were consonant; but this is more onerous to nature, and he needs a greater zeal and application of spirit than in circumstances of conformity, because there everything goes by itself, and so man does not find out whether he is a faithful servant of God. He thrives better amidst differences and finds himself to be faithful much sooner than in the midst of conformity. Should it happen that man went astray, he ought not to dwell on this too long, but rather charge it on his smallness and nothingness, and promptly

turn to God, the sooner the better; then all is over and settled at once. But if he lingers on his faults, and wants to find out how it all came to this, or how he should have done, like this or like that, all these delay his straightening up. Turn to God right away! If you are "dissonant," how will you best become "consonant" again? How will a man draw the farther from death, unless through the One who truly has life in himself? How can he become warmer, unless he draws near to the fire? Then shall he cast all his burden upon God and let Him do; he shall commit all things to God for the best and trust God completely; he shall, by reason of this trust, accept all things as the best, and be wholly at peace.

## 24

### Spiritual Flood

*From a sermon on Acts 2:4*

Mystics are wont to liken the Holy Ghost to a fire which sets the soul ablaze. "Spiritual Flood" uses a quite different image to describe how the Spirit takes possession of man. Here Tauler speaks of a majestic flood of the waters of life, as if "Father Rhine" did submerge "dams and dikes," fill "vale and dale"—a display of overwhelming, effortless and relentless might. Now note the conditions: in order that man may be filled with the Holy Spirit, he must be empty of sin and self; and, in conformity to the best Augustinian tradition, this "emptying" is itself a grant of God.

"**T**HEY were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).... This Holy Spirit came into the apostles and all that were ready to receive it, with great abundance and profusion, and it flooded them inwardly, as if the Rhine would rise, and the

dams and dikes were removed; then would the stream swell and flow and overflow with a mighty roar, as if wanting to drown and engulf all things, and to flood every vale and dale on its path. This is what the Holy Spirit did to the apostles and all those ready to receive it, and it still does so with each hour and without ceasing. It fills and floods all the minds, hearts and souls in which it finds place; it fills them with an abundance of graces and love and gifts which cannot be fully told; it fills the vales and the depths that lay open before it. . . .

Now we ought to mark what we have to do in order that we may receive this Holy Spirit. The immediate and supreme readiness to receive it, the Spirit itself prepares and works out in man. The Spirit has to prepare the place for itself and also receive itself in man. For the Holy Spirit performs two works in man. One work is that the Spirit empties (the soul); the other, that it fills (the soul) which it has emptied. The "emptying" is the first and greatest preparation for receiving the Holy Spirit. . . . If God must come in, then the creatures must go out. Of a necessity, you must do away with all that is within you and all that has you enticed. The animal, bestial soul in man must by all means be removed, that the spiritual soul may be opened. . . .

When this preparation has taken place in man, the Holy Spirit promptly performs its other work in the ready soul. It fills man's receptivity altogether. If indeed you are truly "empty," all the more you shall receive: the less you retain, the more you shall gain. Cocksureness, self-love, self-will, you ought to let all that go. . . . Thus (do) the truly poor in spirit, whom the Holy Spirit fills. It gushes forth into man, with all its riches and treasures, flooding man inwardly and outwardly, and man's highest and lowest powers, both within and without.

Now what man has to do is letting himself be prepared, and making place for the Holy Spirit to begin its work in him. Only a very few do this, even among those in clerical garb, and yet God has chosen them for that purpose. For there are many things that lead a man astray, or that hold fast unto him, now

here, now there: enticements of all kind, influences from without, and that which is established, and that which is well thought of. Thus no one is willing to abandon himself to the Holy Spirit, but makes busy about his things. That is all that people do in these dreary times. How much more should you see to it that the Holy Spirit is left free to begin its work in yourself, so that it may fill you whole.

## 25

### Working for God

*From a sermon on 1 Cor. 12:6*

Our new life is no spiritual mirage. "Working for God" demands that it conclude in specific, concrete obedience at our place of service. Each man has, by God's providence, his calling and station in life. However lowly this calling or station may be, there—and there alone—is his toil acceptable before God. Stop looking somewhere else for a higher service; check every temptation of restlessness.

"**T**HREE are varieties of work and service, but it is one and the same Spirit that worketh all" (1 Cor. 12:6). Children, just as you see one and the same body having many limbs and senses, . . . so are we all one body; we are to each other (as) the body's members, and Christ is the head of the body, and this body has a great variety of members. This man is an eye, this other a hand, this third a foot, or a mouth, or an ear. . . . Children, the foot or the hand should never wish to be the eye. But every man should do the task which God has assigned to him, no matter how hard, and which perhaps another cannot do. . . . There is not a work so small, nor a skill so humble, that does not come from God and is not a special favor. . . .

How comes, then, that one hears so much grumbling? For every man complains that his office hampers him; yet it is from God, and God does not give hindrance to any one. And how comes that a man's conscience plagues him? Yet it comes from God's Spirit; and still it bothers him and makes him restless. My dear child, know this: What makes you restless, is not your works, not by any means; it is the lack of due order in doing your works. If you did your works as it is meet and right, minding God purely and solely, and minding not your own; if you would neither desire nor fear pleasure or displeasure; if you would seek neither profit nor joy, but only God's honor; and if you did your works only for God; then, you see, it could not possibly happen any more, that you be bothered by your conscience. And a spiritual man should rightly be ashamed of having done his works so inordinately and with such a doubtful intention, that one has to hear from him that they plague him. For one may well understand that these works were not done in God, nor with an upright and pure intention, nor out of true, pure love of God, nor to the neighbor's profits. Thus it is that you may find, or that it may be found, whether your deeds went up toward God alone, depending on whether or not you remain at peace.

Our Lord upbraided Martha not for her works, which were holy and good; he upbraided her rather for being a busy-body.

Every man should hold to good, profitable practices, as it happens; cares, he should commit to God, and do his works most discreetly and peacefully, abiding in himself, inviting God into himself, and concentrating the looks of his mind most inwardly and piously; and he should be aware of what it is that moves and drives him to work. . . .

I know a man, a most intimate friend of God, who has been a farmer all the days of his life—more than forty years—and still is. One day he begged from our Lord that he might give up the plough and go sit in the church. God said no, he might not do that; rather he should earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, to honor Jesus' noble, precious blood.

Suso  
1295-1366

26

Rapture  
*The Life, Chap. 2*

The first three selections of Suso's writing are taken from his autobiography. They all refer to experiences dating from the years following his conversion—his "beginning." In "Rapture," Suso relates how he felt something stealing upon him—"It was without form, without mode, and yet it had within itself the gladsome blessedness of all forms and modes." The positive note toward the end of this sentence stands in sharp contrast with the spiritual nihilism of the sects, of which Suso pointedly gives the formula in the *Büchlein der Weisheit*: laboriously to think of nothing, will nothing, do nothing and ultimately be nothing.

**I**T HAPPENED once to him while a "beginner," that he came into the choir on Saint Agnes day after the midday meal of the community. He was there alone and stood in the lower stalls of the right choir. In these days, he was sorely afflicted

with a burden of grief that weighed down upon him. As he stood there disconsolate, with no one to comfort or to help, his soul was caught up in rapture, whether in the body or without the body. And he saw and heard what no tongue can ever tell. It was without form, without mode, and yet it had within itself the gladsome blessedness of all forms and modes. His heart was panting, and yet satisfied; his spirits were joyful and blooming; longings were stilled in him, and desires extinguished. He did but gaze into the glowing radiance in which he lost his awareness of self and of all things. Was it day or night, he did not know. It was a gushing forth of the sweetness of eternal life felt as present, in a motionless, silent experience. He said afterwards: "If this was not Heaven, I do not know what Heaven is, for all the suffering one may possibly conceive is too cheap a price for such a bliss, if he is to possess it for ever."

This ecstatic spell lasted maybe an hour, maybe half an hour. Whether his soul remained in his body, or was parted from his body, he did not know. When he came back to himself, he felt all like a man who has come from another world. In this moment, his body suffered such pain that he thought no one, except a dying man, could suffer as much in so short an instant. He somehow came to himself groaning from the depth of his soul, and his body sank to the ground against his will, as a man in a fainting spell. He wailed and groaned in his heart, saying: "Woe is me, God! Where was I? Where am I now?" He said also: "Ah, Thou, the good of my heart, never can this hour pass away from my heart."

He went his way in body. No one saw these things, nor noticed anything about him. But his soul and mind were full of heavenly marvels within. The heavenly visions went and came inward his innermost, and he felt as if he were hovering in the air. The powers of his soul were filled with the sweet fragrance of Heaven, as when one pours choice spices out of a box, and the box afterwards retains the good odor. This heavenly fragrance remained with him a long time afterwards, and gave him a heavenly desire and yearning after God.

## The Maypole

*The Life, Chap. 12*

This is a good sample of early "baroque" devotion, flowery, perhaps too flowery for our taste. The original devotion to the Rosary is in the same mood, and also the popular exercises in honor of the Virgin Mary during the month of May. In the present instance, however, Suso's devotion has Christ (not Mary) as its object. He plants the Cross for a Maypole, and paraphrases—in the style of the May songs of his ancestral Swabia—the hymn "Hail to thee, O Holy Cross! Hail to thee, glory of the world!" which is used in the Dominican liturgy on the third of May, feast of the Invention of the Cross.

**O**N THE EVE of May Day he used to plant a spiritual Maypole and to honor it every day for some time. Among the fairest boughs that ever grew, he could find none more fit for the beautiful May than the lovable branch of the Holy Cross, which bears more flowers of grace, virtues and ornaments of every kind than any Maypole ever did. Under this Maypole he made six prostrations; with each prostration he desired in his contemplation to adorn the spiritual May with the choicest things which summer might bring forth, and before the Maypole he sang to himself the hymn *Salve Crux Sancta* in this manner: "Hail, heavenly May of the Eternal Wisdom, on which has grown the fruit of everlasting blessedness! For thy eternal adornment I offer thee today, in place of all red roses, a loving heart; for all the little violets, a lowly inclination; for all tender lilies, a pure embrace; for all sorts of beautiful bright colored flowers which heath and meadow,

forest and field, woodland and plain have brought forth this lovely May, or which ever have been or ever will be brought forth, my heart gives thee a spiritual kiss; for the merry songs of all the little birds which ever sang carefree on any May flight, my soul offers a ceaseless hymn of praise; for all the ornaments with which a Maypole has ever been adorned, my heart magnifies thee today with a spiritual song. And I pray thee, o blessed May, to help me so to praise thee in this swift passing time, that I may taste thy living fruit for ever!"

## 28

## Spiritual Tournament

*The Life, Chap. 44*

This passage is written in a quixotic mood. Suso, still very much a "beginner," would gladly receive the token of victory in the tournament of spiritual life, but without having to pay the price. He hates to receive blows, because they hurt; and poor Suso walks away disconsolate and despondent, yet secretly comforted in his soul—at once crying and laughing.

**I**N THE EARLY days of his being a "beginner," the servant wished with all his heart to be well-pleasing in the eyes of the God of love to a singular degree of excellence, yet without pain or toil.

It happened once that he went out in the country for to preach. He boarded a passenger ship on the Lake of Constance. A proud esquire in courtly attire was sitting among other folk. The servant went to him and asked him what manner of a man

he was. He answered: "I am an esquire errant, I bring the gentle lords together to hold courts of chivalry where they thrust and tilt and pay service to fair ladies, and the one who is the best, to him is given honor and reward." The servant said: "And what is the reward?" The esquire replied: "The fairest lady who is there puts a ring of gold on his finger." The servant asked again: "Tell me, my friend, what must one do, to gain the honor and the ring?" The esquire said: "He who withstands the most blows and assaults without losing his heart, but bears himself boldly and manfully, is firm in the saddle, and lets the blows rain upon him, to him the price is given." Then the servant asked: "Now tell me. If he were bold in the first charge, would that be enough?" Said the esquire: "No, he must endure the tournament right through; even if he receives heavy blows til his eyes throw sparks and the blood breaks out from his mouth and his nose, still he must bear it all, if he is to win praise." Now the servant asked: "But, dear comrade, dare he mourn somewhat or make a sad face, in case he is struck so hard?" The esquire answered: "No, and should his heart sink in his body, as happens to many, he dare not do such a thing, but he must look cheerful and bold, otherwise he will become a laughing stock and lose the honor and the ring."

At these words, the servant felt all downcast and, sighing from the depth of his heart, he said: "Ah, high Lord, so the knights of this world must endure such pains for so small a reward, indeed nothing at all! Ah, God, how fitting that one should suffer much greater labors for the eternal price! O tender Lord, would that I were worthy to be thy spiritual knight! O fair, lovely Eternal Wisdom, whose fulness of grace has no equal in all lands, would that my soul might win a ring from Thee! For this, I would suffer whatever Thou didst ordain."

When he arrived at the place to which he was going, God sent him great pains, as much as he could bear, and the poor man nearly despaired of God, and the crowd had wet eyes through pity for him. He had forgotten all his chivalrous

daring and the vows which he had taken before God while being bent on spiritual chivalry. He grew sad and querulous: why did God thus bear upon him and send him such sufferings?

On the morrow at dawn, a calm came over his soul and, in the fading out of his senses, he heard an inner voice that said: "Where now is this famous chivalry of thine? What good is a knight of straw and a man of cloth? Great daring while in love and despair while in pain, that is no way to win the eternal ring which thou dost desire." The servant answered and said: "Alas, Lord, the tournaments in which one must suffer for Thee in his heart are much too wearisome!" And the voice in him replied: "Yet the fame, the glory, and the ring of my knights, whom I honor, are steady and eternal." But the servant felt all downcast, and he said very humbly: "Lord, I was wrong; only let me weep in my pain, for my heart is full." The voice said: "Woe to thee! Wilt thou weep like a woman and disgrace thyself in the heavenly court? Wipe thy eyes and look cheerful, that neither God nor man may realize that thou hast wept for pain." The servant began to laugh while tears were still running down his cheeks, and he promised to God he would weep no more, that he might receive from Him the spiritual ring.

## 29

### Eternal Wisdom Speaks

*The Book of Eternal Wisdom, Chap. 7*

This passage is on a higher level than the selections from Suso's autobiography. Eternal Wisdom, God's own Word, discloses to the soul the twofold mystery

of its eternal and temporal birth. The style is inspired from the *Sapientia Salomonis*. The motive of the Incarnation is stated dialectically: to veil the unbearable splendor of God, and to utter His name and His love in words which humans can hear.

I AM in myself the uncomprehended good, who has always been and ever shall be, who was never expressed nor ever will be. I may well give myself to be felt within a heart, but no tongue has proper words to express me. And yet I, the supernatural, immutable good, give myself to each creature according to its fitness and to its own way to receive me; thus do I wrap the sun's glow in a cloth, and give thee in corporal words a spiritual understanding of myself and my sweet love.

I present myself tenderly before the eyes of thy heart; now then adorn me and clothe me spiritually, and make me beautiful after thine own desire. Give me all that can move thy heart to singular love and to a fulness of inner joy. Behold, all, absolutely all, that thou and all men can think of form, of beauty, of grace, all these are in me more excellently than anyone can tell. And it is through such words that I give myself to be known.

Now hear more: I am of high birth, of noble lineage. I am the excellent Word of the Father's heart. The abysmal love of my natural Sonship in the bosom of His unique Fatherhood is exceedingly well pleasing in His beloved eyes, in the sweet outburst of love of the Holy Spirit. I am the throne of love, I am the crown of blessed men. . . . I play in the Godhead a play of joy that so rejoices the angel host, that in their sight a thousand years is like a short little hour. The army of heaven turn their eyes to me with renewed wonder and know me. Their eyes are fastened on my eyes, their hearts tend to me, their souls and minds bow down before me without ceasing. Blessed is he who shall enter into the play of love and the dance of joy in the heavenly peace, at my side, at my right hand, in blissful assurance, for ever and ever!

Ruysbroeck  
1293-1381

30

## Recollections

*Of the Seven Enclosures, Chap. 21*

This selection describes a practice which Ruysbroeck recommended for "beginners." They ought, he says, to keep a mental ledger of their sins and of God's favors. This should lead them unconditionally to trust in Him who has revealed God's will to forgive and who has paid their debts.

EVERY evening, when you go to bed, . . . you are to go over your old book, that is, your past life, which is sinful and wicked, in you as in all humans. Revert into your own self, and open the book of your conscience which shall be opened and produced in the judgment of God before all the world. And so test, probe and judge your own self even now, that you may not be condemned then. You are to search your conscience and to examine how you have lived and how you have sinned in word, desire, fancy and thought, . . . in all your unreasonable doings, which were alien to charity and contrary to the commandments, the counsels, and God's most blessed will. These and other like things are so many and so diverse that no one can know them but God alone. They mar and defile and sully the countenance of the soul; this is why they are written with black ink, that is, with the lust of flesh and blood, and with perverted earthly inclinations. Here you must be displeased with yourself. Let your countenance fall, like that of the publican (Luke 18:13), before your heavenly Father and his eternal mercy, and say like the prophet David: "Lord, I have sinned, be merciful to me poor sinner! Give in my

heart the water of tears and true repentance, that I may cleanse the countenance of my soul from my sins, ere I stand before Thine eyes! . . ." And never give up, until He answers you, and speaks words of real peace and true bliss to your heart. Then He will rid you of anxiety and fear, doubt and dismay, and all that in you displeases Him. And He shall give you faith, hope, and trust in Him for everything you need in time and eternity. . . .

Thereupon you shall put away that old book and draw yourself up on your knees with thanksgiving and praise. And you shall take out of your memory the white book written with red letters, that is, the spotless life of our Lord Jesus Christ. His soul is unblemished, a fullness of all graces, and glowing red with fiery love. His glorified body is of a brilliant white, shining above the sunlight, yet bearing the marks of the lashes and covered His precious blood. These are the red letters which show and attest the truth and reality of His love. . . . Behold your champion and your hero; see how He has fought for you until death, has vanquished your enemy, and has killed in his death the death of your sins. He has paid your debt, and with His blood He has purchased and bought for you His Father's heritage. Then He ascended into heaven, to open the gates for you, and to prepare the abode of eternal glory. Herein you shall rightly rejoice. And so carry in your heart the love and passion of your beloved Lord, that He may live in you and you in Him.

# 31

## Doldrums

*A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness, Chap. 2*

"Doldrums" is an analysis of the growing pains which at times affect Christian souls. Suso complained repeatedly of a peculiar feeling of impotence

and lack of desire. Ruysbroeck regards these symptoms not as an accident, but as a normal feature of spiritual growth. We must be brought to realize both the inertia of our sinful nature and the futility of our efforts to overcome it short of God's powerful grace. Self-denial and acceptance are the only way out of this bitter experience.

IT MAY happen that you suffer some sloth, weariness, and grief in your own being. You may be without taste or desire, without longing for spiritual things; poor, wretched, forsaken, and deprived of every consolation from God; gloomy, without taste or desire for any devotions inward or outward, and feeling heavy as if you were going to sink into the ground. Yet be not dismayed, but rather place yourself in the hands of God, and desire that His will be done and His honor upheld. The dark thick cloud shall soon clear away, and the light of the bright sun, our Lord Jesus Christ, will shine upon you for comfort and grace, more than you have ever felt before. This grace, you shall obtain through self-denial by humbly submitting to all pain and grief. This is why the grace of God shall fill and enlighten all that is within you, and thus you shall experience that God loves you and that you please Him. . . . Your heart shall bloom with the new gifts of God in a great yearning for a new life. Your desires shall rise to God like a fire of devotion aflame with thanksgiving and praise, while your spirit shall humble itself in self-contempt, lowliness and abasement. Considering now your sins, your failures, and your manifold wickedness, you shall find cause for sadness and regret, and understand how utterly unworthy you are of God's consolation or regard. . . . With such knowledge as you thus acquire, descend into yourself in lowliness and humility, while rising to a higher reverence and esteem of God who has spared you in the midst of your sins, and now, through no merit of yours, has filled you with consolation and with His divine gifts. Strive, therefore, to rise up toward God in desire, and descend into yourself in humility, and so shall you thrive and grow on either side, and God's grace flow in you.

## Liberty Reborn

*A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness, Chap. 3*

In this passage, Ruysbroeck ponders over the theme of Christian liberty. We are made free in the very measure of our restored intimacy with God, while our will is being led through obedience to a greater conformity with His will. Reluctance, tension and anxiety are reduced gradually and ought to vanish entirely if man's desires are made to coincide perfectly with God's design.

CHRIST has redeemed us, not with our works, but with His works, and with His merits he has made us free and redeemed. But if we are to taste and to hold this freedom, then His Spirit must consume our spirit with love, and plunge it into the abyss of His favors and of His goodness. This is where our spirit is baptized, made free, and united with His Spirit. See: there, our self-will dies in the will of God, so that we may not and cannot will otherwise than God willeth; for the will of God has become our will, and this is the root of true charity. There, we are born again from the Spirit of God. There, our will is free, for it is one with the free will of God. And there, our spirit is raised and taken up to become, through love, one spirit, one will, one freedom with God. In this godlike freedom, the human spirit is raised through love above its own nature, that is, above pain, labor, reluctance; above anxiety and worry, fear of death, hell and even purgatory; above whatever ordeal may befall man in his body and soul, in time and eternity. Whether comfort or distress, give or take, death or life, whatever happens, pleasure or pain, all those remain below the loving freedom in which the human spirit is united with the Spirit of God. See: these men are poor in spirit, who have retained nothing as their own, and blessed are they, because the love of God is their life.

Thomas a Kempis  
1380-1471

33

## Compunction

*Imitation of Christ I, 21*  
Translated by W. BENHAM

It is normal that we should feel uneasy, because "grounds for just grief there are in our sins and vices," and because a true Christian knows that he is "unworthy of divine consolation." Thus, compunction is an indispensable condition for regaining spiritual vitality.

**I**F THOU wilt make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God, and long not to be too free, but restrain all thy senses under discipline and give not thyself up to senseless mirth. Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion. Compunction opens the way for many good things, which dissoluteness is wont quickly to lose. It is wonderful that any man can ever rejoice heartily in this life, who considers and weighs his banishment, and the manifold dangers which beset his soul.

Through lightness of heart and neglect of our shortcomings we feel not the sorrows of our soul, but often vainly laugh when we have good cause to weep. There is no true liberty nor real joy, save in the fear of God with a good conscience. . . .

Know thyself to be unworthy of divine consolation, and worthy rather of much tribulation. When a man has perfect compunction, then all the world is burdensome and bitter to him. A good man will find sufficient cause for mourning and

weeping; for whether he considers himself, or ponders concerning his neighbor, he knows that no man lives here without tribulation, and the more thoroughly he considers himself, the more thoroughly he grieves. Grounds for just grief and inward compunction there are in our sins and vices, wherein we lie so entangled that we are but seldom able to contemplate heavenly things.

If thou thoughtest upon thy death more often than how long thy life should be, thou wouldest doubtless strive more earnestly to improve. And if thou didst seriously consider the future pains of hell, I believe thou wouldest willingly endure toil or pain and fear not discipline. But because these things reach not the heart, and we still love pleasant things, therefore we remain cold and miserably indifferent.

Oftentimes it is from poverty of spirit that the wretched body is so easily led to complain. Pray therefore humbly unto the Lord that He will give thee the spirit of compunction, and say in the language of the prophet: "Feed me, O Lord, with bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink" (Ps. 80:5).

34

## Voice of the Living Word

*Imitation of Christ III, 1-2*  
Translated by W. BENHAM

This selection from Thomas a Kempis points to the necessity of listening to the "soft whisper of God" bearing witness in our hearts to the truth of His revelation. For God's written word needs to be

brought home to us by the Spirit who inspired it, if we are to draw life from it and not merely to find in the Bible "as literature" the indifferent echo of voices from ages past.

"**I** WILL hearken what the Lord God shall say within me" (Ps. 85:8). Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking within it, and receives the word of consolation from His mouth. Blessed are the ears which receive the echoes of the soft whisper of God, and turn not aside to the whisperings of this world. Blessed truly are the ears which listen not to the voice that sounds without, but to that which teaches truth inwardly. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to things without, but are fixed upon things within. Blessed are they who search inward things and study to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for the receiving of heavenly mysteries. Blessed are they who long to have leisure for God, and free themselves from every hindrance of the world. Think on these things, O my soul, and shut the doors of thy carnal desires, so mayest thou hear what the Lord God will say within thee. . . .

"Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:9). Let not Moses speak to me, nor any prophet, but rather speak Thou, O Lord, who didst inspire and illuminate all the prophets; for Thou alone without them canst perfectly fill me with knowledge, whilst they without Thee shall profit nothing.

They can indeed utter words, but they give not the spirit. They speak with exceeding beauty, but when Thou art silent they kindle not the heart. They give us scriptures, but Thou makest known the sense thereof. They bring us mysteries, but Thou revealest the things which are signified. They utter commandments, but Thou helpest to the fulfilling of them. They show the way, but Thou givest strength for the journey. They act only outwardly, but Thou dost instruct and enlighten the heart. They water, but Thou givest the increase. They cry with words, but Thou givest understanding to the hearer.

## The Praise of Love

*Imitation of Christ III, 5*  
Translated by W. BENHAM

This passage was inspired by Paul's praise of love in 1 Cor. 13: 1-13. *Love* is an imperfect rendering of the Latin *caritas*, but the word *charity* would be misleading. Love is considered here in the total perspective of spiritual progress, for "love was born of God, and cannot rest save in God"—a maxim which echoes the saying of Augustine that "our heart shall continue anxious until it comes to rest in Thee."

LOVE is a great thing, a good above all others, which alone makes every heavy burden light, and equalises every inequality. For it bears the burden and makes it no burden, it makes every bitter thing to be sweet and of good taste. The surpassing love of Jesus impels to great works, and excites to the continual desiring of greater perfection. Love wills to be raised up, and not to be held down by any mean thing. Love wills to be free and aloof from all worldly affection, lest its inward power of vision be hindered, lest it be entangled by any worldly prosperity or overcome by adversity. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing loftier, nothing broader, nothing pleasanter, nothing fuller or better in heaven nor on earth, for love was born of God and cannot rest save in God above all created things.

He who loves, flies, runs, and is glad; he is free and not hindered. He gives all things for all things, because he rests in One who is high above all, from whom every good flows and proceeds. He looks not for gifts, but turns himself to the Giver above all good things. Love oftentimes knows no measure, but breaks out above all measure; love feels no burden, reckons not labors, strives after more than it is able to do,

pleads not impossibility, because it judges all things which are lawful for it to be possible. It is strong therefore for all things, and it fulfils many things, and is successful where he who loves not, fails and lies down.

Love is watchful, and whilst sleeping still keeps watch; though fatigued it is not weary, though pressed it is not forced, though alarmed it is not terrified, but like the living flame and the burning torch, it breaks forth on high and securely triumphs. If a man loves, he knows what this voice cries. For the ardent affection of the soul is a great clamor in the ears of God, and it says: "My God, my Beloved! Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine."

# 36

## Mastering the Heart's Desires

*Imitation of Christ III, 11*  
Translated by W. BENHAM

Here is Thomas a Kempis' statement of an essential principle of spirituality: A strict control of the heart's desires, even virtuous ones, is necessary if one is not to run the risk of seeking self instead of God, and if one is to refrain from rushing to self-appointed tasks which God has not ordained; for such tasks may bring only confusion within and disorder without.

"**M**Y SON, thou hast still many things to learn, which thou hast not learned well yet."  
"What are they, Lord?"

"To place thy desire altogether in subjection to My good pleasure, and not to be a lover of thyself, but an earnest seeker of My will. Thy desires often excite and urge thee forward;

but consider with thyself whether thou art not more moved for thine own objects than for My honor. If it is Myself that thou seekest, thou shalt be well content with whatsoever I shall ordain; but if any pursuit of thine own lies hidden within thee, behold it is this which hinders and weighs thee down.

"Beware, therefore, lest thou strive too earnestly after some desire which thou hast conceived, without taking counsel of Me; lest haply it repent thee afterwards, and that displease thee which before pleased, and for which thou didst long as for a great good. For not every affection which seems good is to be forthwith followed; neither is every opposite affection to be immediately avoided. Sometimes it is expedient to use restraint even in good desires and wishes, lest through importunity thou fall into distraction of mind, lest through want of discipline thou become a stumbling block to others, or lest by the resistance of others thou be suddenly disturbed and brought to confusion.

"Sometimes indeed, it is needful to use violence, and manfully to strive against the sensual appetite, and not to consider what the flesh may or not will; but rather to strive after this, that it may become subject, however unwillingly, to the spirit. And for so long it ought to be chastised and compelled to undergo slavery, even until it be ready for all things, and learn to be contented with little, to be delighted with things simple, and never to murmur at any inconvenience."

Gerson  
1363-1429

37

## Theology: Speculative or Mystical

*Considerationes de Mystica Theologia*, 29-30

This selection contrasts didactic, or "notional" theology, which is taught in the schools, with its necessary counterpart, "mystical" theology, which is an insight born of love. Mystical theology is akin to what Aquinas describes as the understanding of wisdom, as distinguished from the spirit of science. It is defined, therefore, as the experimental knowledge of God which is achieved in the intimacy of love. It is not the privilege of a few, but God's gift to everyone who chooses to live according to the demands of love. It does not bear any necessary relationship to a person's intellectual capacity or scholastic proficiency.

THE FIRST and principal difference [between speculative and mystical theology] is subjective, and refers to the faculties in man. Indeed, either theology resides in the rational soul; yet if one distinguishes the faculties of the soul according to their properties, then speculative theology resides in the intellectual faculty, whose object is truth. Mystical theology we place in the affective faculty, to which we ascribe the good as object. . . .

There are also (between speculative and mystical theology) other differences which are derived from the manner after which either is acquired. One such difference is that speculative theology makes use of argumentation, in the same manner as the sciences of nature. This is why some call it "scholastic" or "literary" theology. Of course, mere scholastic exercises are insufficient, unless scholars endeavor with vehement zeal to obtain a distinct and intimate knowledge of the tradition of the greatest doctors. Otherwise, all their theologizing is only for the ears of the body, like the chatter of a child, or of a magpie; nor do they understand well what they discuss and what they affirm, in spite of which, quite often, we still grant them the name of theologians. Mystical theology does not deal with a mere knowledge of literature; it does not necessarily involve schooling in, shall we say, the school of the intellect; but it is acquired rather in the school of affectivity and through an eager practice of the moral virtues which cleanse and prepare the soul, and of the theological virtues which enlighten it and make it perfect and blessed; thus (mystical theology) has an affinity to the three hierarchical acts, to wit: purging, illuminating, and perfecting. Such a school may be called a school of religion or love, just as the intellect is to be called a school of science and knowledge. Now it often happens that the affection may be the stronger where there is little knowledge; this is why, in order to receive instruction in mystical theology, there is no need of much science, particularly of science acquired (by human efforts). For we know by faith that God is all desirable, all lovable; why then, once the affectivity is purified, enlightened, prepared and set in motion, should not the soul be carried all, as in a rapture, to Him who is all desirable and all lovable, without an excessive study of books? Hence we conclude our distinction by saying this: Mystical theology, though it is a most exalted and perfect knowledge, can be the possession of every believer, even of a poor girl or of a simple man. That speculative theology is different, no one can deny. For, just as the learning of metaphysics demands a strenuous practice of grammar, logic, and philosophical discipline, so

does the acquisition of speculative theology require distinguished minds, yet together with the infusion of divine grace. The latter happened to the apostles, as it happens to men of pure heart to whom the vision of God is promised, and to humble friends of God, to whom He has revealed the unknown secrets of the wisdom and whatever (Christ) had heard from His Father. Thus, in the case of Anthony the Great, as in the case of many others who were unlearned, what I beg to call "literary" theology was given from above.

From these premises, we may conclude that speculative theology never attains to perfection without mystical theology, but rather the contrary.

## 38

### Love's Insight

L. Mourin, *Six sermons François inédits de Jean Gerson*  
Paris, 1946; pp. 170 et seq.

"Love's Insight" develops the same theme starting from a thinly veiled allegory. "Devotion" contends with "Reason" and achieves victory; for the spiritual advance of the soul is the result of love, and the unitive, "conforming" power of love enables the human soul to pierce "the obscure darkness in which God is seen."

"**D**E VOTION" speaks to the blessed soul most secretly and as it were in silence and in a darkness within the soul, very near and most near, very deep and most deep. Her voice touches the spiritual ear in a language of which I only know that it differs from the language of "Reason," and that it can be understood only in the utmost privacy of the soul to which

"Devotion" speaks. Even "Reason," who stands close by, cannot understand this language. This is "the peace which passes all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), "the name which no one knows, except he who receives it" (Rev. 2:17). Now think of it. How could I tell you of this language? How could I expound it to you? From thence it follows that an unlearned person who is devout and who loves God may have a higher and worthier knowledge of the deity, of the power, wisdom and goodness of God, of His kindness and loveliness, than the philosophers ever had, or than many theologians or other persons who are without love and devotion.

At first, the blessed soul, who walks toward God, puts one foot forward, the foot of understanding, on the road to God, and receives the teaching of reason enlightened with true Christian faith, to wit, that God is all good, all loving, and "all desirable" (Cant. 5:16). Then the soul moves the other foot, affection, by means of a loving devotion, and passes beyond all things, and through all things, for love wavers never, until the soul joins its God, its love, its delight and cherished desire, and until it becomes one with Him, as if, of the two, there was one spirit made. For "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17), and love transforms a lover into his loved one.

Here the soul is turned as it were into the ashes of humility, in the fiery furnace of a living love, and it becomes like unto perfect glass, clear, neat and pure, swiftly flowing to take such figure and spiritual imprint as the Holy Ghost wishes to give the soul unto likeness, when the soul is joined to it and receives its stamp. Thus the soul becomes a perfect mirror without blemish nor bubbles, smooth and well polished, to reflect the Deity. And since the soul forgets all other things in this hour, such unheeding can be compared to the coating of lead on the back of the mirror; otherwise, the eye of the soul could gaze through it and see the things of this earth, and the sight of the heavenly things would thus be hindered. This same unheeding of the soul may be compared also with the shadow or the obscure darkness in which God is seen.

Catherine of Siena  
1347-1380

39

## The Christian Duty of Love

From a letter to Fra Matteo Tolomei  
Translated by VIDA D. SCUDDER

This is taken from a letter to a Dominican priest, whom Catherine addresses as her "son." She emphasizes the freedom of the gift of "first love" where-with God has loved us, which makes us unprofitable servants and perpetual debtors. The only way out of this moral bankruptcy is for us to give free service to our fellow men and stop thinking that we are doing God a favor. The theology underlying this passage is equally remote from mystical quietism and from the Pelagian notion of merit.

D EAREST son in Christ sweet Jesus: I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious blood, with desire to see you seek God in truth, not through the intervention of your own fleshliness or of any other creature, for we cannot please God through any intervening means. God gave us the Word, His only-begotten Son, without regard to His own profit. This is true, that we cannot be of any profit to Him; but the reverse is not the case, because, although we do not serve God for our profit, nevertheless we profit just the same. To Him belongs the flower of honor, and to us the fruit of profit. He has loved us without being loved, and we love because we are loved. . . . There it is, then: we cannot be of any profit to Him, nor love Him with this first love. Yet I say that God demands of us, that as He

has loved us without any second thoughts, so He should be loved by us. In what way can we do this, then, since He demands it of us, and we cannot give Him? I tell you: through a means which He has established, by which we can love Him freely, and without the least regard to any profit of ours; that is, we can be useful, not to Him, which is impossible, but to our neighbor. Now by this means we can obey what He demands of us for the glory and praise of His Name; to show the love that we have for Him, we ought to serve and love every rational creature, and extend our charity to good and bad, to every kind of people, as much to one who does us ill service and criticizes us as to one who serves us. For God is no respecter of persons, but of holy desires, and His charity extends over just men and sinners.

One man, to be sure, He loves as a son, and one as a friend, and another as a servant, and another as a person who has departed from Him, for whose return He longs, these last are the wicked sinners who are deprived of grace. But wherein does the Highest Father show His love to these? In lending them time, and in time He gives them many opportunities, either to repent of their sins, taking from them place and power to do as much ill as they would, or He has many other ways to make them hate vice and love virtue, the love of which takes away the wish to sin. And so, through the time which God gave them in love, from foes they are made friends and have grace and are fit to become the Father's heirs.

## 40

### Better than Asceticism

From a letter to Daniella of Orvieto  
Translated by VIDA D. SCUDDER

This piece expresses the opinion that there is something better than asceticism, and that perfection demands that we should do away with our perverse

self-will. The principle is not new, but it acquires a special authority in its formulation by such an ascetic as Catherine.

**N**ow I tell thee of one thing, which I beg that we rebuke in ourselves: if sometimes the devil or our own very evil construction of matters tormented us by making us want to send or see all the servants of God walking in the same way that we are walking ourselves. For it frequently happens that a soul which sees itself advance by way of great penance, would like to send all people by that same way; and if it sees that they do not walk there, it is displeased and shocked, feeling that they are not doing right; while sometimes it will happen that the man is doing better and being more virtuous than his critic, although he does not do as much penance. For perfection does not consist in macerating or killing the body, but in killing our perverse self-will. And in this way, of the will destroyed, submitted to the sweet will of God, we ought indeed to desire all men to walk. Good is penance and the maceration of the body; but do not show me these as a rule for every one, since all bodies are not alike, and also since it often happens that a penance begun has to be given up from many accidents that may occur. If, then, we made ourselves or others build on penance as a foundation, it might come to nothing. . . . We ought, then, to build our foundation on killing and destroying our own perverse will; with that will submitted to the will of God, we shall devote sweet, hungry, infinite desire to the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

# 41

## Remembrance of Past Sins

*The Dialogue*, Chap. 66  
Translated by ALGAR THOROLD

This excerpt from *The Dialogue* is a warning against the morbid tendency to dwell at length in the remembrance of past sins. Such remembrance should

be only a means to stimulate repentance; and repentance should lead a sinner to the wounds of Christ—the sinner's only refuge from despair and discouragement. Both the doctrine and the imagery are reminiscent of some statements of Augustine, and they anticipate Luther's theology.

**T**HE VOICE OF ETERNAL TRUTH. I do not wish the soul to consider her sins, either in general or in particular, without also remembering the blood and the broadness of my mercy, for fear that otherwise she should be brought to confusion. And together with confusion would come the devil, who has caused it, under color of contrition and displeasure of sin, and so she would arrive at eternal damnation, not only on account of her confusion, but also through the despair which would come to her, because she did not seize the arm of My mercy. This is one of the subtle devices with which the devil deludes My servants, and in order to escape from his deceit, and to be pleasing to Me, you must enlarge your hearts and affections in My boundless mercy, with true humility. Thou knowest that the pride of the devil cannot resist the humble mind, nor can any confusion of spirit be greater than the broadness of My good mercy, if the soul will only truly hope therein. Wherefore it was, if thou remember rightly, that once, when the devil wished to overthrow thee by confusion, wishing to prove to thee that thy life had been deluded, and that thou hadst not followed My will, thou didst that which was thy duty, which My goodness (which is never withheld from him who will receive it) gave thee strength to do, that is, thou didst rise, humbly trusting in my mercy, and saying: "I confess to my Creator that my life has indeed been passed in darkness, but I will hide myself in the wounds of Christ crucified, and bathe myself in His blood, and so shall my iniquities be consumed, and with desire will I rejoice in my Creator." Thou rememberest that then the devil fled, and, turning round to the opposite side, he endeavored to inflate thee with pride, saying: "Thou art perfect and pleasing to God, and there is no more need for thee to afflict thyself or to lament thy sins."

And once more I gave thee the light to see thy true path, namely, humiliation of thyself, and thou didst answer the devil with these words: "Wretch that I am, John the Baptist never sinned and was sanctified in his mother's womb. And I have committed so many sins, and have hardly begun to know them with grief and true contrition, seeing who God is, Who is offended by me, and who I am, who offend Him." Then, the devil, not being able to resist thy humble hope in My goodness, said to thee: "Cursed that thou art, for I can find no way to take thee."

Savonarola  
1452-1498

42

## On Not Being Too Tense

Ridolfi, *Le Lettere di Girolamo Savonarola*  
P. 187 ff.

This is a letter from Savonarola to the friars of San Marco, which I have translated from the Italian text. After we have heard Catherine of Siena denounce the evil of indiscriminate asceticism, we still ought to read Savonarola's advice that it does no good to be too tense. Could it be that, while addressing his brothers, he was really preaching to himself? At any rate, this is sound doctrine.

MOST beloved brethren in Christ Jesus (viz. the Dominicans of Florence), having care not only of your spiritual salvation, but also of your bodily health, and considering that several among you suffer in their body, being plagued with pains in their head, I have decided diligently to inquire concerning the cause of such an infirmity, which seems to reign among us in these days more than it ever did in the past. And I have found that it comes from nothing else than that you strain your minds in your prayers and divine meditations, as you make violent efforts to lift yourselves up to a height that still is too much for you, and as you forcibly apply your brains at that to which they are not yet fit; as a result, the vital spirits and the powers of the soul are distracted and diverted from their proper operations, the head begins to ache, and the animal spirits themselves are bewildered by too many discourses and by the strain of inordinate meditations. And

thus you lose your sleep, you gain a headache, from whence come other infirmities, which finally make you useless in the Church of God and the Order, and a burden to yourselves and to your neighbors. You wish to go from one extreme to the other without transition. But diligently consider God's wisdom in the natural order, and you shall see that nature, which is governed by God, does not pass from an extreme to the other without transition, and when it must pass through intermediary steps, it does not leap over any of them, but goes from one step to the one immediately following until it has passed through all of them one by one. And it progresses most smoothly and as it were imperceptibly through all these steps without ever turning back, without ever stopping, but it continues in its work, progressing from perfection to perfection until it reaches the ultimate perfection of that which is to be achieved. . . . Neither should you, therefore, pass from one extreme to the other without transition, as if in the very hour of your coming from the sins of the world or from secular life, you wanted to leap at once to divine contemplation; now this is wishing to fly without wings. It is necessary for you to take the proper steps, and to consider that true contemplation of things divine proceeds from perfect love; perfect love proceeds from perfect purity of heart, which in turn is achieved by thorough purifications and through a variety of means.

# 43

## Hope's Victory *Expositio in Psalmum "In te Domine Speravi"*

"Hope's Victory" is taken from a meditation on Psalm 31. It is of no consequence from a doctrinal standpoint. The style, uniformly emphatic, is not particularly appealing. But the circumstances make

this meditation unique. It was written in the prison where Savonarola awaited his condemnation. We hear the voice of a man crying to God from the abyss. He knew that he was doomed. He knew his failure. He knew that God had refused to bless the fruits of his bitter zeal. Still he could proclaim his absolute sincerity, but he knew also that not because of this—but only because of God's mercy—he would be justified in the end.

SORROW has besieged me, with a great and strong army has encompassed me; it has oppressed my heart with clamors and weapons; day and night it ceases not to fight against me. My friends are in its camp and have been made my foes. Whatever I see, whatever I hear, they bear the ensigns of Sorrow. . . . Who shall be my protector? Who shall come to my rescue? Where shall I go? How can I escape? I know what I will do. I will turn to things unseen and lead them against the visible. And who shall be the leader of an army so exalted and so formidable? Hope, which is of things unseen. Hope, I say, shall come against Sorrow and conquer it. . . . Behold, Hope has come already; it has brought gladness, it has taught me to fight and has said unto me: Cry aloud, cease not; and I say, What shall I cry? Cry, says Hope, boldly and with all thy heart: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded for ever; in Thy righteousness deliver Thou me" (Ps. 31:1).

O wonderful power of Hope, whose countenance Sorrow cannot bear. Comfort has come already. Now let Sorrow cry and clamor. Let the world bring pressure, let the foe rise against me, I fear nothing, for in Thee, Lord, I trust, because Thou art my hope, because Thou hast set on high a place of refuge (Ps. 91:9). I have already entered it, Hope has led me in. I was not overbold in entering; Hope will excuse me before Thee. Behold, says Hope, O man, the refuge of God on high; open thine eyes and see. God alone is, alone Himself is an infinite ocean of being. Other things are as if they were not, for

all depend on Him, and unless He upheld them, they would at once return to nought, because of nought they were made. Consider the might of Him who in the beginning created heaven and earth. Does He not Himself work all things in all? Who can move his hand without Him? Who can think anything of himself? Ponder the wisdom of Him who rules all things in His immovableness, who sees all things, and before whose eyes all things are naked and open. It is He who alone has knowledge and power to deliver thee, alone to comfort, alone to save. Put not thy trust in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation. The heart of men is in His hand. He shall turn it wherever He will (Prov. 21:1). This is the One who is wise and mighty to help thee. Perhaps thou doubtest that He will? Ponder His goodness. Consider His loving kindness. Is not He Himself the One who loves men, who for the sake of men became a man, and for sinners was crucified? Of a truth He is thy father who created thee, who redeemed thee, who has ever done thee good. Is it that a father could forsake his son? Cast thyself upon Him, and He will welcome thee and save thee. Search the Scriptures and thou shalt find how urgently His great fidelity bids thee to hope in Him. Why is this? Indeed because He wills to save thee. For what does He say by the prophet? "Because he has hoped in Me, therefore will I deliver him" (Ps. 91:14). Behold, for no other reason does He will to deliver man, because he has hoped in Him. And what did prophets preach, or apostles, or the Lord of the apostles Himself, but that men should hope in the Lord? Therefore, O men, sacrifice the sacrifice of righteousness and trust in the Lord (Ps. 4:5), and He shall deliver you and release you from all tribulation.

## From the Renaissance Onward: Spain

THE CULTURE of the Middle Ages had shown signs of decay since the end of the thirteenth century. It collapsed totally in the course of the fifteenth. Medieval philosophy and Biblical exposition could no longer carry a theological superstructure which had become top-heavy with artificial distinctions and farfetched hypotheses. This, of course, is to be regretted. Medieval culture, whatever its shortcomings, had provided a framework for the integration of vital ideas and experiences. When the frame fell apart, too many valid elements of the Christian synthesis were lost or distorted.

The humanism of the Renaissance, with its revamped pagan culture, could not possibly fill the vacuum. Protestantism brought a new emphasis but decidedly no synthesis—even in the case of Calvin, the most systematic of the Reformers. The Catholic restoration initiated at the Council of Trent was handicapped by its controversies with the Protestants, its conservatism and its internal dissensions in matters of theology: it is somewhat of an irony that Thomism, precisely when the *Summa* was made an official textbook in the schools of divinity, came into fierce competition with the “modern” theology of the Jesuits—just another phase of the conflict between the medieval and the baroque.

Even Christendom, a creation of the Middle Ages, had fallen apart. There were now two distinct orders: the spiritual and

the temporal; the Church and the State, or rather the States, for the Renaissance, in spite of its effort to achieve cultural unification, had to witness the rise of political nationalism in the various "lands" of Europe.

This all means that the spiritual life of Christianity, which no human power can possibly disrupt, went on—deep down under an increasing variety of external manifestations. It is impossible to link the various currents of spirituality of this period with denominational ideologies. There is no such thing as a Protestant mysticism or a Catholic mysticism. The living stream cuts across ecclesiastical borders. There are the men who speak of grace first, last and always; and they may be Dominicans, Calvinists or Jansenists. And there are those who think in terms of man's co-operation with grace, and they may be Jesuits, or "Remonstrants," equally abhorred by the strict Calvinists of the Synod of Dort. And there are those also who, no matter what their ecclesiastical or theological allegiance, insist on a Christian's being disinterested with regard to his spiritual progress or even his salvation, to bar even the semblance of selfish motivation. Nor can we speak of national "schools" of spirituality—such as, for instance, the German school of the fourteenth century. Our geographical classification, therefore, is a mere convenience and claims no theological relevancy.

We begin our survey with Spain, a country more isolated from continental Europe even than Britain. Ever since the early Middle Ages, the people of the Iberian Peninsula—behind the forbidding barrier of the Pyrenees—lived entirely on their own, politically and spiritually. Critically locked in war with the Moors, they could not keep pace with the cultural evolution of Europe. Spain remained medieval, long after medieval institutions had virtually disappeared everywhere else. To be sure, the humanism of Erasmus found some echo in the universities of the Peninsula. There were even would-be reformers, branded as "Lutherans," like Juan de Valdés; but the common people were not interested, and the Inquisition

saw to it that the movement could not spread, even in the most exclusive circles of scholars. The secular clergy, with a few exceptions, was spiritually as good as dead. Monks and nuns were the only keepers of the flame or rather of rare embers smoldering in a heap of ashes. Yet in the early decades of the sixteenth century, there was a sudden flare-up, for which the newly founded "Company of Jesus" and an offshoot of the medieval order of the Carmelites were responsible.

The founder of the Company was Iñigo, or Ignatius Lopez, the son of a knight who held the castle fortress of Loyola in the Basque country, from which he derived his surname. He was born in 1491 and was sent as a page to the court of Ferdinand of Aragon (the "Catholic") at Valladolid. He spent the leisure of his adolescence in devouring romances of chivalry—a favorite pastime among Spanish youngsters—and, when he was of age, took service in the army. Severely wounded on May 20, 1521, while taking part in the defense of Pampeluna against the French, Ignatius was carried to the family castle. During the months of his convalescence, he resolved to give himself up to God for a life of service. He began his new life with a voluntary retreat in a grotto of the Montserrat, near Manresa, where he spent a full year in the practice of asceticism, meditating on the life of Christ and on the battle of God and Satan for the possession of the souls of men. These military clichés are such as Ignatius used, for he remained a soldier at heart all his life. He even thought of himself as a crusader when, in 1523, he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—somehow an anticlimax. Back in Spain in 1524 he frequented the grammar schools at Barcelona—his previous scholarship was practically nil—and studied at the Universities of Alcala, Salamanca and Paris, where he apparently disturbed the academic serenity of the official theologians. In 1534 Ignatius and six companions, kneeling in a chapel of Montmartre, pledged themselves to special duty in the Church, as the Pope might direct. Paul III accepted the service of the "Company," which undertook to reconquer Rome spiritually. The new institute

was definitely approved in 1540 and its members were assigned to preaching, teaching, caring for students and organizing missions abroad. The founder (and first "General") of the Company died in Rome in 1556.

The discipline of voluntary obedience is the unifying principle of Ignatian spirituality. The aim is to procure under all circumstances the greater glory of God, whose kingdom on earth Ignatius identified with the Church of the Pope. Now he saw this kingdom being threatened from within and from without by powerful enemies, and he took his stand with absolute sincerity. Thus, his doctrine is eminently practical. Speculative elements are reduced to a bare minimum. On the other hand, Ignatius gives evidence of a thorough knowledge of the secret motives which make men act, of the ways of good and evil in the human heart. Meditation he regards as the basic practice, because it is within everybody's power, no matter how little educated or how little advanced spiritually. The *Book of the Exercises*, the first edition of which appeared in 1548, contains graded themes of meditation. Their primary purpose is to help men discover their particular calling and commit themselves by an irrevocable decision. This is what Ignatius calls "Election."

We move now to the Carmel. This medieval order of friars and nuns derived its origin from the groups of hermits who once had haunted the sacred mountain, and who claimed to be the sons of the prophet Elijah. The primitive fervor of the order had much abated, until it was stirred up anew by the efforts of a woman, Teresa Sanchez de Cepeda—or according to Carmelite usage, Teresa de Jesu. She was born at Avila in 1515. Sentimental and romantic, she too indulged in reading books of chivalry. After her education in a convent of Augustinian dames, she entered (at the age of twenty) the monastery of the Incarnation, which was affiliated with the Carmelites and resembled more a fashionable clubhouse for unmarried Christian ladies. Under the strain of an acute illness Teresa turned away from futility and, in 1562, obtained from eccle-

siaistical authorities permission to leave the Incarnation in order to establish (also at Avila) a monastery of strict observance. She placed it under the patronage of Saint Joseph, the first of a chain of similar houses in various cities of Castile. These foundations aroused much hostility. Older convents saw them as rivals. Conservative people took offense at Teresa's peregrinations on the roads of Spain; and the account of her mystical experiences, composed at the request of her confessor, was brought before the Inquisition. The case was tabled indefinitely, however, and Teresa was left free to continue her work. She died at Alba de Tormes in 1582, while returning to Avila from her Andalusian foundations.

The spiritual writings of Teresa are descriptive and intensely practical. She aimed at imparting not theories but her own experiences, either because she was requested to write them down by her superiors—as is the case with the *Life*, the *Foundations* and the *Mansions*, also called the *Interior Castle*—or because she simply desired to be helpful to her daughters as in the *Way of Perfection*. Of course, some of her expressions reflect the theological opinions of her advisers and of the books she read. But more than once she begged candidly to disagree, and her writings as a whole show much spontaneity and human warmth. She explains how the soul is gradually permeated by a living faith growing into an overwhelming experience, how it becomes increasingly sensitive to divine inspirations, and how its awareness of being moved by the Spirit—dim at first—develops into an acute perception of being drawn irresistibly into a personal “union” with God.

Juan de Yepes—or John of the Cross—is Teresa's spiritual son. He was born in 1542 at Fontiberos in the province of Avila. He attended the grammar schools of the Jesuits at Medina del Campo, where his widowed mother was working. At the age of twenty-one he joined the Carmelites and studied theology at Salamanca. He met with Teresa in 1568, and undertook to restore the strict observance of the Carmelite rule among the friars. Charged with rebellion by local and pro-

vincial superiors who refused to yield their jurisdiction over the reformed houses, he was confined for eight months in the Carmel of Toledo. After his liberation, and after the status of the new communities had been defined provisionally, he resumed his reform activities in Andalusia. New conflicts arose, however, and John retired to the monastery of la Peñuela near Ubeda, where he died in 1591.

John of the Cross is the greatest analyst of the advanced degrees of spirituality. The ever recurrent image of the "night" in his writings refers both to the groping of the soul in the dark, as it is deprived of the external support of creatures, and to the ineffable character of the union with God—beyond what we describe as experience of faith, knowledge or vision. Thus his mysticism runs somehow parallel to Dionysian contemplation, with its emphasis on the negative. While lacking the warmth of Teresa's writings, his treatises are distinguished by their analytical insight as well as by their lyricism.

Ignatius of Loyola  
1491-1556

44

## Meditation on the Two Standards

*Spiritual Exercises*

Translated by members of the English Province S.J.

This meditation is most characteristic of the method of Ignatius. It starts with a mental representation of the gathering of the army of God and the army of Satan, preparatory to "Election"—the candidate being impelled to decide under which standard he chooses to enlist. Observe the technique of the Ignatian meditation: the "preludes," the two parts with three points each, and the "colloquies," one of which is with the Virgin—we are in Catholic Spain, and Mary is a Christian knight's Lady. Mark also the skillful "application of the senses." Ignatius felt that the external senses of man and his imagination had better be drafted to help in the meditation; otherwise the imagination, being left without an object, would go on woolgathering. The concluding prayer, *Anima Christi*, is not from Ignatius but from an unknown medieval source.

**T**HE MEDITATION on Two Standards, the one of Christ, our sovereign Leader and Lord: the other of Lucifer, the mortal enemy of our human nature.

The usual preparatory prayer, (namely) "to ask our Lord

God for grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordained purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty."

The first prelude is the history: it will be here how Christ calls and desires all under His banner: Lucifer on the contrary under his.

The second prelude is a composition of place, seeing the spot: it will be here to see a vast plain of all the region round Jerusalem, where the supreme general Leader of all the good is Christ our Lord: and to imagine another plain in the country of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

The third prelude is to ask for what I want: it will be here to ask for knowledge of the deceits of the wicked chieftain, and for the help to guard against them; and for knowledge of the true life which our Sovereign and true Leader points out, and for grace to imitate Him.

The first point is to imagine the chieftain of all the enemy as seated in that great plain of Babylon, as on a lofty throne of fire and smoke, in aspect horrible and fearful.

The second point is to consider how he summons together innumerable devils, how he disperses them some to one city, some to another, and so on throughout the whole world, omitting not any provinces, places, or states of life, or any persons in particular.

The third point is to consider the address which he makes, and how he warns them to lay snares and chains; telling them how they are first to tempt men to covet riches (as he is wont to do in most cases), so that they may more easily come to the vain honor of the world, and then to unbounded pride; so that the first step is riches, the second honor, the third pride; and from these three steps he leads them to all other vices.

In the same way, on the other hand, we are to consider the Sovereign and true Leader, Christ our Lord.

The first point is to consider how Christ our Lord, in aspect fair and winning, takes His station in a great plain of the country near Jerusalem on a lowly spot.

The second point is to consider how the Lord of the whole

world chooses out so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them throughout the whole world diffusing His sacred doctrine through all states and conditions of persons.

The third point is to consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends, whom He sends on this expedition, recommending to them that they desire to help all, by guiding them first to the highest degree of poverty of spirit, and even to actual poverty, if it please His Divine Majesty, and He should choose to elect them to it: leading them, secondly, to a desire of reproaches and contempt, because from these two, humility results; so that there are three steps: the first, poverty, opposed to riches; the second, reproaches and contempt, opposed to worldly honor; the third, humility, opposed to pride: and from these three steps let them conduct them to all other virtues.

A colloquy to our Lady to obtain for me grace from her Son and Lord that I may be received under His Standard. And first, in the highest degree of poverty of spirit, and not less in actual poverty, if it please His Divine Majesty, and He should choose to elect and receive me to it. Secondly, in bearing reproaches and insults, the better to imitate Him in these, provided only I can endure them without sin on the part of any person, or displeasure to His Divine Majesty; and after this an *Ave Maria*.

To ask the same from the Son, that He obtain for me this grace from the Father; and then to say an *Anima Christi* (as follows):

Soul of Christ, sanctify me,  
Body of Christ, save me,  
Blood of Christ, like strong wine inebriate me,  
Water from Christ's side, cleanse me,  
Passion of Christ, comfort me,  
O good Jesus, hear me,  
In Thy wounds, hide me,  
Let me not be separated from Thee,  
From the evil foe, defend me,  
In the hour of my death, call me,

And order me to come to Thee,  
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee,  
World without end.

To ask the same from the Father, that He grant me this grace; and to say a *Pater Noster*.

## 45

## Rules for the Discernment of Spirits

*Spiritual Exercises*

Translated by members of the English Province S.J.

In addition to themes of meditation, the *Book of the Exercises* contains directives for spiritual leaders and advisers. This is a series of rules for the "discernment of spirits"—a term borrowed from 1 Cor. 12:10 and 1 John 4:1. It is quite possible that Ignatius knew Gerson's treatise *De probatione spirituum*. We may disagree with the seemingly literal reference to spirits, good and bad, but let us not mind this piece of angelology. We may replace *spirits* by *drives* or *impulses*, and perhaps we shall find that Ignatius' observations are still valuable.

**I.** It belongs to God and his angels to give in their motions true joy and spiritual gladness, removing all sadness and disturbance of mind occasioned by the enemy; while it belongs to him to fight against such joy and spiritual consolation, bringing forward pretended reasons, sophistries, and perpetual fallacies.

**II.** It belongs to God our Lord alone to grant consolation to the soul without any preceding cause for it, because it belongs

to the Creator alone to go in and out of the soul, to excite motions in it, attracting it entirely to the love of his divine majesty. I say, without cause, that is, without any previous perception or knowledge of any object from which such consolation might come to the soul, by means of its own acts of the understanding and will.

III. When a cause has preceded, it is possible for the good as well as the bad angel to afford consolation to the soul, but with opposite intentions: the good angel for the advantage of the soul, that it may progress and advance from good to better; the bad angel for the contrary, that he may bring it henceforward to yield to his wicked and malicious designs.

IV. It belongs to the bad angel, transfiguring himself into an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul, and to come out his own way; that is to say, to begin by inspiring good and holy thoughts in conformity with the dispositions of the just soul, and afterwards gradually to endeavor to gain his end, by drawing the soul into his secret snares and perverse intentions.

V. We ought to be very careful to watch the course of such thoughts; and if the beginning, middle, and end are all good, leading to all that is good, this is a mark of the good angel; but if the thoughts suggested end in something bad or distracting, or less good than that which the soul had determined to follow, or if they weaken, disturb, or disquiet the soul, taking away the peace, the tranquillity, and the quiet she enjoyed before, it is a clear sign that they proceed from the bad spirit, the enemy of our advancement and of our eternal salvation.

VI. When the enemy of our human nature has been discovered and recognized by his serpent's tail, and by the end to which he leads, it is profitable for him who has been thus tempted by him to examine afterwards the course of the good thoughts suggested to him and their beginning, and to remark how little by little the enemy contrived to make him fall from the state of sweetness and spiritual delight he was in, until he brought him to his own depraved purpose; that by the experience and knowledge thus acquired and noted he may be on his guard for the future against his accustomed deceits.

VII. In the case of those who are making progress from good to better, the good angel touches the soul gently, lightly, and sweetly, as a drop of water entering into a sponge; and the evil spirit touches it sharply, and with noise and disturbance, like a drop of water falling on a rock. In the case of those who go from bad to worse, spirits touch it in the contrary manner: and the reason of this difference is the disposition of the soul, according as it is contrary or similar to these angels; for when it is contrary to them they enter with perceptible commotion and disturbance; but when it is similar to them, they enter in silence, as into their own house, through the open doors.

VIII. When there is consolation without any preceding cause, though there be no deceit in it, inasmuch as it proceeds only from God our Lord, as before explained, nevertheless the spiritual person to whom God gives this consolation ought with great watchfulness and care to examine and to distinguish the exact period of the actual consolation from the period which follows it, in which the soul continues fervent and feels the remains of the divine favor and consolation lately received; for in this second period it often happens that by its own thoughts, from its own habits, and in consequence of its conceptions and judgments, whether by the suggestion of the good or evil spirit, it makes various resolves and plans, which are not inspired immediately by God our Lord; and hence it is necessary that they be thoroughly well examined before they receive entire credit and are carried out into effect.

Teresa of Avila  
1515-1582

46

## Awareness of Divine Favors

*The Life*, Chap. X  
Translated by D. LEWIS

"Awareness of Divine Favors" denounces a wrong notion of humility. Christian humility does not require that we blind ourselves to whatever privileges God may bestow upon us. These we are to acknowledge gratefully for the comfort which they afford.

SOME think it humility not to believe that God is bestowing His gifts upon them. Let us clearly understand this, and that it is perfectly clear God bestows His gifts without any merit whatever on our part; and let us be grateful to His Majesty for them; for if we do not recognize the gifts received at His hands, we shall never be moved to love Him. It is a most certain truth, that the richer we see ourselves to be, confessing at the same time our poverty, the greater will be our progress, and the more real our humility. . . .

If, then, it is lawful, and so beneficial, always to remember that we have our being from God, that He has created us out of nothing, that He preserves us, and also to remember all the benefits of His death and Passion, which He suffered long before He has made us, for every one of us now alive—why should it not be lawful for me to discern, confess, and consider often that I was once accustomed to speak of vanities, and that now our Lord has given me the grace to speak only of Himself?

Here, then, is a precious pearl, which, when we remember that it is given us, and that we have it in possession, powerfully invites us to love. All this is the fruit of prayer founded on humility. What, then, will it be when we shall find ourselves in possession of other pearls of greater price, such as contempt of the world and of self, which some servants of God have already received? . . .

We must renew our strength to serve Him, and strive not to be ungrateful, because it is on this condition that our Lord dispenses His treasures; . . . for how shall he be useful, and how shall he spend liberally, who does not know that he is rich? It is not possible, I think, our nature being what it is, that he can have the courage necessary for great things who does not know that God is on his side; for so miserable are we, so inclined to the things of this world, that he can hardly have any real abhorrence of, with great detachment from, all earthly things, who does not see that he holds some pledges for those things that are above. It is by these gifts that our Lord gives us that strength which we through our sins have lost.

A man will hardly wish to be held in contempt and abhorrence, nor will he seek after the other great virtues to which the perfect attain, if he has not some pledges of the love which God bears him, together with a living faith. Our nature is so dead, that we go after that which we see immediately before us; and it is these graces, therefore, that quicken and strengthen our faith.

## 47

### The Four States of Mental Prayer

*The Life*, Chap. XI-XIX  
Translated by D. LEWIS

This selection is a description of four states of mental prayer—from discursive meditation up to more intuitive forms characteristic of the advanced

degrees of spiritual life. Teresa borrows her illustrations from the various methods of watering a Spanish *buerta*—part orchard, part vegetable garden—by hand, by means of a water wheel, by way of permanent irrigation or (best of all) by letting God's rain do the job. The progression is from active to passive—or, rather, receptive—types of prayer. A warning: attempts at using the "topography" of the *Way of Perfection* and the successive "apartments" of the *Interior Castle* to make a synopsis of the four states of prayer as described in *The Life* may prove deceptive. This is especially true if one tries to figure out what mansion one belongs in, as it is probable then that one will not yet have entered the outer precincts.

**A**BEGINNER must look upon himself as making a garden, wherein our Lord may take His delight, but in a soil unfruitful, and abounding in weeds. His Majesty roots up the weeds, and has to plant good herbs. . . . Let us now see how this garden is to be watered, that we may understand what we have to do: how much trouble it will cost us, whether the gain be greater than the trouble, or how long a time it will take us. It seems to me that the garden may be watered in four ways: by water taken out of a well, which is very laborious; or with water raised by means of a waterwheel—it is a less troublesome way than the first, and gives more water; or by a stream or brook, whereby the garden is watered in a much better way—for the soil is more thoroughly saturated, and there is no necessity to water it so often, and the labor of the gardener is much less; or by showers of rain, when our Lord Himself waters it, without labor on our part—and this way is incomparably better than all the others of which I have spoken. . . .

Of those who are beginners in prayer, we may say that they are those who draw water up out of the well—a process which, as I have said, is very laborious, for they must be wearied in keeping the senses recollected, and this is a great labor, because the senses have been hitherto accustomed to distractions. . . .

They must strive to meditate on the life of Christ, and the understanding is wearied thereby. Thus far we can advance of ourselves, that is, by the grace of God, for without that, as every one knows, we never can have one good thought. . . .

Let us now speak of the second manner of drawing the water, which the Lord of the vineyard has ordained (namely, with a waterwheel) . . . I apply it to the prayer called the prayer of quiet. Herein the soul begins to be recollected; it is now touching on the supernatural—for it never could by any efforts of its own attain to this. . . . This is a gathering together of the faculties of the soul within itself, in order that it may have the fruition of that contentment in greater sweetness; but the faculties are not lost, neither are they asleep; the will alone is occupied in such a way that, without knowing how it has become a captive, it gives a simple consent to become the prisoner of God; for it knows well what it is to be the captive of Him it loves. . . . The prayer of quiet, then, is a little spark of the true love of Himself, which our Lord begins to enkindle in the soul; and His will is, that the soul should understand what this love is by the joy it brings. . . .

Let us now speak of the third water wherewith this garden is watered—water running from a river or from a brook. In this state our Lord will keep the gardener, and in such a way as to be, as it were, the gardener Himself, doing all the work. . . . The faculties of the soul now retain only the power of occupying themselves wholly with God; not one of them ventures to stir, neither can we move one of them without making great efforts to distract ourselves—and indeed I do not think we can do it at all at this time. Many words are uttered in praise of God, but disorderly; unless it be that our Lord orders them Himself. . . . The soul in this state would have all men behold it, and know of its bliss, to the praise of God, and help it to praise Him. It would have them to be partakers of its joy, for its joy is greater than it can bear. . . . Accordingly, the soul is, as it were, living the active and contemplative life at once, and is able to apply itself to works of charity and the affairs of its state, and to spiritual reading. Still, those who arrive at this

state are not wholly masters of themselves, and are well aware that the better part of the soul is elsewhere. . . .

May the Lord teach me words whereby I may in some measure describe the fourth water. . . . I am now speaking of the water which cometh down from heaven to fill and saturate in its abundance the whole of this garden with water. . . . The soul is conscious, with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance: breathing, and all the bodily strength, fail it, so that it cannot even move the hands without great pain; the eyes close involuntarily, and if they are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible; the ear hears; but what is heard is not comprehended. The senses are of no use whatever. . . . It is useless to try to speak, because it is not possible to conceive a word; not, if it were conceived, is there strength sufficient to utter it; for all bodily strength vanishes, and that of the soul increases, to enable it the better to have fruition of its joy. Great and most perceptible, also, is the outward joy now felt. . . . The good effects of this prayer abide in the soul for some time. . . . It begins to show signs of its being a soul that is guarding the treasures of heaven. . . . It begins to benefit its neighbors, as it were, without being aware of it, nor doing anything consciously: its neighbors understand the matter, because the odor of the flowers has grown so strong as to make them eager to approach them.

## 48

### Christ the Door

*The Life, Chap. XXII*  
Translated by D. LEWIS

"Christ the Door" shows a marked reaction against the negative ways of Dionysian and Eckhartian mysticism. Even if we grant that God is transcendent

and cannot be expressed by anything created, it still remains that the humanity of Christ—far from being an obstacle—is man's indispensable means for attaining God. In this piece Teresa expresses her very concrete thoughts about her Spanish crucifix and the eucharistic presence.

**I**N SOME books on prayer, the writers . . . advise us much to withdraw from all bodily imagination, and draw near to the contemplation of the Divinity; for they say that those who are advanced (in the ways of prayer) would be embarrassed or hindered in their way to the highest contemplation, if they regarded even the Sacred Humanity itself. . . . They think that, as this work of contemplation is wholly spiritual, any bodily object whatever can disturb or hinder it. They say that the contemplative should regard himself as being within a definite space, God everywhere around, and himself absorbed in Him. This is what we should aim at.

This seems to me right enough now and then; but to withdraw altogether from Christ, and to compare His divine body with our miseries or with any created thing whatever is what I cannot endure. May God help me to explain myself! . . .

In the beginning, . . . I labored to remove from myself every thought of bodily objects . . . and I contrived to be in a state of recollection before God. This method of prayer is full of sweetness, if God helps us in it, and the joy of it is great. And so, because I was conscious of the profit and delight which this way furnished to me, no one could have brought me back to the contemplation of the Sacred Humanity; for that seemed to me to be a real hindrance to prayer. . . . (Still) it pleased Thee, in Thy goodness, to succor me, by sending me one who has delivered me from this delusion; and afterwards by showing Thyself to me so many times, as I shall relate hereafter, that I might clearly perceive how great my delusion was, and also tell it to many persons. . . .

Who is there so proud and wretched as I, that, even after laboring all his life in penances and prayers and persecutions,

can possibly imagine himself not to be exceedingly rich, most abundantly rewarded, when our Lord permits him to stand with St. John at the foot of the cross? I know not into whose head it could have entered to be not satisfied with this, unless it be mine, which has gone wrong in every way where it should have gone right onwards.

Then, if our constitution, or perhaps sickness, will not permit us always to think of His Passion, because it is so painful, who is to hinder us from thinking of Him risen from the grave? . . . Behold Him here, before His ascension into heaven, without pain, all-glorious, giving strength to some and courage to others. In the most Holy Sacrament, He is our companion, as if it was not in His power to withdraw Himself for a moment from us. . . .

With so good a friend and captain ever present, Himself the first to suffer, everything can be borne. He helps, He strengthens, He never fails, He is the true friend. I see clearly, and since then have always seen, that if we are to please God, and if He is to give us His great graces, everything must pass through the hands of His most Sacred Humanity, in whom His Majesty said that He is well pleased. I know this by repeated experience: our Lord has told it me. I have seen clearly that this is the door by which we are to enter, if we would have His supreme Majesty reveal to us His great secrets. . . .

The withdrawing from bodily objects must no doubt be good, seeing that it is recommended by persons who are so spiritual. . . . But that we should carefully and laboriously accustom ourselves not to strive with all our might to have always, and please God it be always, the most Sacred Humanity before our eyes, this, I say, is what seems to me not to be right: it is making the soul, as they say, to walk in the air; for it has nothing to rest on, how full soever of God it may think itself to be.

**John of the Cross**  
**1542-1591**

**49**

**O Happy Night!**

*Poems, I, stanzas 3-5*  
 Translated by E. ALLISON PEERS

This is a good example of the short poems which John of the Cross developed, verse by verse, in his prose writings. The three stanzas form the leitmotiv of the treatise, *Dark Night of the Soul*.

O HAPPY night and blest!  
 Secretly speeding, screen'd from mortal gaze,  
 Unseeing, on I prest,  
 Lit by no earthly rays,  
 Nay, only by heart's inmost fire ablaze.

'Twas that light guided me,  
 More surely than the noonday's brightest glare,  
 To the place where none would be  
 Save one that waited there—  
 Well knew I whom or ere I forth did fare.

O night that led'st me thus!  
 O night more winsome than the rising sun!  
 O night that madest us,  
 Lover and lov'd, as one,  
 Lover transform'd in lov'd, love's journey done!

## The Dark Road

*Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book II, Chap. 4*  
Translated by E. ALLISON PEERS

In "The Dark Road," John of the Cross discusses the purification of the senses, the imagination and the understanding—which is necessary if the soul is to pass beyond the common experiences of mortal life. This selection is slightly reminiscent of another "climbing experience," that of Gregory of Nyssa. See selection 2, "The Vigil of the Soul."

IN THIS LIFE, the highest thing that can be felt and experienced concerning God is infinitely remote from God and from the pure possession of Him. Isaiah and St. Paul say: "That which God hath prepared for them that love Him neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart or thought of man" (Is. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9). So, however greatly the soul aspires to be perfectly united through grace in this life with that to which it will be united through glory in the next, . . . it is clear that, in order perfectly to attain to union in this life through grace and through love, a soul must be in darkness with respect to all that can enter through the eye, and to all that can be received through the ear, and can be imagined with the fancy, and understood with the heart, which here signifies the soul. And thus a soul is greatly impeded from reaching this high estate of union with God when it clings to any understanding or feeling or imagination or appearance or will or manner of its own, or to any other act or to anything of its own, and cannot detach and strip itself of all these. For, as we say, the goal which it seeks is beyond all this, yea, beyond even the highest thing that can be known or

experienced; and thus a soul must pass beyond everything to unknowing.

Wherefore, passing beyond all that can be known and understood, both spiritually and naturally, the soul will desire to come to that which in this life cannot be known, neither can enter into its heart. And, leaving behind all that it experiences and feels, both temporally and spiritually, and all that it is able to experience and feel in this life, it will desire with all desire to come to that which surpasses all feeling and experience. And, in order to be free and void to that end, it must in no wise lay hold upon that which it receives, either spiritually or sensually, within itself, . . . considering it all to be of much less account. For the more emphasis the soul lays upon what it understands, experiences and imagines, and the more it esteems this, whether it be spiritual or no, the more it loses of the supreme good, and the more it is hindered from attaining thereto. And the less it thinks of what it may have, however much this be, in comparison with the highest good, the more it dwells upon that good and esteems it, and, consequently, the more nearly it approaches it. And in this wise the soul approaches a great way toward union, in darkness, by means of faith, which is likewise dark, and in this wise faith wondrously illumines it.

# 51

## God's Dark Light

*Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, Chap. 8  
Translated by E. ALLISON PEERS

This selection from *Dark Night of the Soul* describes what the theorists of mysticism call passive purification. It helps us to understand that the passing beyond the created world—its patterns, forms and

memories—cannot be achieved exclusively by human effort. There is such a thing as a God-induced blindness to what is not God, and only in the night of this blindness can God be seen.

**W**E OBSERVE that a ray of sunlight which enters through the window is the less clearly visible according as it is the purer and freer from specks, and the more of such specks and motes there are in the air, the brighter is the light to the eye. The reason is that it is not the light itself that is seen; the light is but the means whereby the other things that it strikes are seen, and then it is also seen itself, through its having struck them; had it not struck them, neither it nor they would have been seen. . . .

Now this is precisely what this Divine ray of contemplation does in the soul. Assailing it with its Divine light, it transcends the natural power of the soul, and herein it darkens it and deprives it of all natural affections and apprehensions which it apprehended aforetime by means of natural light; and thus it leaves it not only dark, but likewise empty, according to its faculties and desires, both spiritual and natural. And, by thus leaving it empty and in darkness, it purges and illumines it with Divine spiritual light even when the soul thinks not that it has this light, but believes itself to be in darkness, even as we have said of the ray of light, which, although it be in the midst of the room, yet, if it be pure and meet nothing on its path, is not visible. With regard, however, to this spiritual light by which the soul is assailed, when it has something to strike—that is, when something spiritual presents itself to be understood, however small a speck it be and whether of perfection or imperfection, or whether it be a judgement of the falsehood or the truth of a thing—it then sees and understands much more clearly than before it was in these dark places.

## From the Renaissance Onward: Germany

THE German Reformation ought not to be regarded merely as a transformation of the old ecclesiastical setup under the pressure of historical circumstances, nor merely as a shift of theological orientations under the impact of a fast developing secular culture. It was above all a spiritual revolution, which arose out of its leaders' fresh insight into the deeper aspects of Christian faith, and which called ultimately for a modification of the ecclesiastical and theological status quo. The climate in which the Reformation took place had been built up by such "prereformers" as, for instance, Jacques le Fèvre d'Etaples, whose Biblical piety and whose mysticism influenced both Luther and Calvin. It was felt that the Church would have to check its externalism, revert to the pure Gospel, let irrelevant traditions go and revise the meaning and the fitness of its institutions. While Roman conservatism shunned such moves, thus making the break unavoidable, it soon became evident that Catholicism could ill afford to remain stagnant; feeling that it was being challenged, it undertook to reform itself in its own way. But it was too late, for now the unity of the Church lay hopelessly broken.

Martin Luther, the central figure of the crisis, was born at Eisleben in Saxony, in 1483. His father was a miner, and it is perhaps worth noting that the mining communities of Ger-

many have often become the hotbeds of a religious mysticism which was prompted by the awe-inspiring hazards of the occupation. At the age of seventeen, Luther was sent by his parents to the University of Erfurt, to study the liberal arts and law. In 1505 the tragic death of one of his comrades struck him with the fear of God's wrath visited on unrepentant sinners, and he entered the Augustinian friary of Erfurt, where he earned the doctorate of theology in 1512. His fears had grown worse, and the kind exhortations of his master Staupitz failed to relieve him. How could he be sure of the reality of his repentance, and how could he feel at peace if a perfect contrition were the prerequisite for God's forgiveness? Penance did not help, nor "works," nor even the sacraments—until faith in the mercy of God, unconditionally offered to men in Christ, grew on him as a vital and overwhelming experience. In this light he began to formulate his doctrine of grace, but he soon ran into the opposition of Rome, took his stand at the Diet of Worms in 1520 and was excommunicated. His two years' confinement as a political refugee in the electoral castle of the Wartburg marks his beginning as a reformer. The support (not always wholesome) of the nobility allowed the ecclesiastical reconstruction of Germany to be carried into the open; and the city of Wittenberg, where Luther worked until his death in 1546, became the capital of German Protestantism.

Luther's theology stands in a close relationship to his spiritual experience. His doctrine is not derived from speculation, but rather from the impact of the Gospel on his entire life. I have selected three passages from the commentary on Galatians, in which the intensely practical character of Luther's doctrine appears in bold relief, without the theological apparatus of his polemic writings.

What ought to have been a reformation of the Church turned out to be the creation of a new Church; and Luther's theology—born of experience—was replaced by a new orthodoxy, the principal and in a sense unique dogma of which was that salvation is achieved by faith only. This proposition, cor-

rect in itself, was abused in many ways. Already in Luther's time, some enthusiasts had jumped to the conclusion that, therefore, morals are indifferent, this world being the devil's realm anyway. Protestant scholasticism overstressed the last word of the proposition "by faith *only*," disparaging the possibility of any real righteousness of his own in the Christian, and thus making of faith—which should have been the principle of a new life here and now—merely a means of escaping eternal punishment. But pious Christians, mostly laymen, denounced this alteration of the doctrine as a mockery of Christianity. Most of them were not theologians, and their protest issued from their religious instinct rather than from a deliberate critique.

Jacob Boehme is one of those men. He was born of poor peasants at Alt Seidenberg near Görlitz, Saxony, in 1575. During his *Wanderjahren* as an apprentice cobbler, he witnessed the cold formalism of the official (Lutheran) Church, and felt attracted toward pietism. He also absorbed a goodly dose of theosophic and cabalistic speculation. Back in Görlitz in 1594, he married the butcher's daughter and settled as a master shoemaker. The drab activities of his trade and his family life were relieved by vivid religious experiences, verging on the ecstatic. His record of such experiences drew the enmity of Dr. Richter, the *pastor primarius* of Görlitz, who condemned Boehme's unorthodoxy. But the spirit who moved the cobbler was stronger than Dr. Richter, and Boehme went on writing treatise after treatise until in 1623 the pastor had him cast out of town. He went to Dresden, where he obtained some support from a certain Dr. Walther, official chemist (or rather alchemist) to the Elector of Saxony. Within a few months, however, Richter died and Boehme was allowed to return to Görlitz. He died in 1624, still unreconciled with the official Church.

Boehme consistently stresses the reality of man's regeneration, as he is being born again of the Spirit, whereas the *pastor primarius* of Görlitz was likely to speak of the "forensic imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the believer." For Boehme, fidelity to the inspirations of the Spirit and an abso-

lute surrender of self are the conditions of a godly life, rather than the recitation of historical facts or of the official doctrine neatly printed in the catechism.

During the eighteenth century, Protestantism was in danger of being altered by the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Theologians rationalized Christianity, in order to make it "scientifically" acceptable. The Kantian divorce of experience and pure reason threatened to turn Christianity into an artificial ideology not essentially connected with its historical foundations. We have not yet recovered from this danger, and our modern "demythologizers" continue the line. It is generally assumed that the so-called "existentialist" reaction—a very poor label—began with Søren Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century. But Kierkegaard, who merely wrestled with the Hegelians, was himself influenced by Hamann, the contemporary of Kant and his most pertinent critic. Hamann did not carry the perpetual chip on the shoulder which makes the misanthropic Dane so tiresome. He could occasionally be just as caustic; but instead of lavishing his vitriol upon Christendom as a whole, he reserved it for proved cases of gratuitous speculation and of watered-down Christianity.

Johann Georg Hamann was born at Königsberg, East Prussia, in 1730, the son of the *Stadt Bader*, a combination of hydrotherapist, chiropractor and surgeon. From 1746 to 1752 he attended miscellaneous courses at the University—studying theology, law, philosophy and languages, without bothering to take a degree. After doing some private tutoring, he became an intimate of the Berens family, wealthy traders of Riga. He journeyed to London in 1757 to be their agent. As a businessman he was an utter failure, ran into debts and kept bad company, until he was shocked out of his sad condition by reading the Bible, which suddenly became alive before him. He recorded this experience in his journals and in a confession addressed to his father. Back in Riga in 1758, he was denied the hand of Catherine Berens of whom he was enamored, and he returned to his father's home. He contracted what he called a

"marriage of conscience"—we would say a common-law marriage—with the housemaid, Anna Regina Schumacher, in 1763. We are given to understand that he had imperious motives for this irregularity. He refers to Catherine Berens as "his bride from God's hand," while Anna Regina became—in the words of Nadler, the modern biographer of Hamann—"his Hagar." Hamann was poor all his life, what with feeding and educating the four children whom Anna Regina bore. In 1777 he obtained a position as translator of French documents in the administration of customs, but the King of Prussia was a notorious miser when it came to paying salaries. Fortunately, poverty did not hamper Hamann's spiritual and intellectual activity. Some relief came in 1784 when a Westphalian landholder, Franz Buchholtz, presented him with a considerable gift, enabling him to resign his desk job. In 1787 he journeyed to Westphalia to visit his benefactor, and soon became the center of a circle of persons interested in the discussion of philosophical and religious problems. He died in Münster, in the house of his hostess, Princess Gallitzin, on June 21, 1788—a Lutheran among Roman Catholics, but, in a more real sense, a Christian among Christians.

We need not survey the whole of Hamann's literary activity, but rather point to his *Métacritique* of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, since the latter weighed so heavily on the philosophical and religious evolution of the nineteenth century. Hamann opposes Kant's disparagement of tradition and experience, and his arbitrary disjunction of intellect and sense perception. Hamann believed that, to affirm the discontinuity of these naturally related processes was gratuitous assumption. After all, it is not evident that Kantian philosophy should confer upon those who profess it a particular respectability—university professors notwithstanding. Hamann saw clearly that the adoption of Kant's principles would fatally reduce Christianity to the rank of a subjective ideology having in man its origin and its achievement. This was, in his eyes, about as bad as the watered-down Judaism of his contemporary, Mendelssohn.

Martin Luther  
1483-1546

52

## Christ's Healing Presence

*Commentary on Galatians 3:28*  
Translated by MIDDLETON

"Christ's Healing Presence" affirms the possibility for the Christian to conquer sin and death, to the extent in which he stands united to Christ through faith. Now this "mystical" union is not thought of as a rare experience open to only a few—Luther was never much interested in "the few"—but rather as the invisible reality which transforms every Christian's existence and enables him to ride the storm.

CHRIST sitteth not idly in heaven, but is present with us, working and living in us; as Paul says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). And here likewise, "Ye have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Faith, therefore, is a certain steadfast beholding, which looketh upon Christ alone, the conqueror of sin and death and the giver of righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. . . .

This was notably and lively represented by the brazen serpent, which is a figure of Christ. Moses commanded the Israelites who were stung by serpents in the desert, to do nothing else but behold it steadfastly, and not to turn away their eyes. They that did so, were healed by that steadfast and constant gaze (Num. 21:6-9). But they which obeyed not Moses'

command to behold the brazen serpent, but looked elsewhere upon their wounds, died.

So, if I would find comfort and life, when I am at the point of death, I must do nothing else but apprehend Christ, and look at Him, and say: I believe in Jesus-Christ, the Son of God, who suffered, was crucified, and died for me: in whose wounds, and in whose death I see my sin, and in His resurrection victory over sin, death and the devil, also righteousness and eternal life. Besides Him I see nothing, I hear nothing. This is true faith concerning Christ, and in Christ, whereby we are made “members of His body, of His flesh and bones” (Eph. 5:30). In Him, therefore, “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Christ and our faith must be thoroughly joined together. We must be in heaven, and Christ must live and work in us, not by speculation and naked knowledge, but in deed, and by a true and substantial presence.

## 53

## Assurance of God's Favor

*Commentary on Galatians 4:6*

Translated by MIDDLETON

Here Luther states what he craved when he was assailed by despair. He wanted to know that the Christian's assurance of his salvation is no illusion, but rather a growing reality as his faith in Christ ceases to be an abstraction to become a living experience. Luther insists that faith—God-given as it is—needs to be exercised in order that it may overcome fear and other destructive emotions.

**G**RACE is more abundant and stronger than sin. The mercy and truth of the Lord reigneth over us for ever. Wherefore sin cannot terrify us nor make us doubtful of the grace of God, which is in us. So long as Christ, the vanquisher of sin, is

at the right hand of God, making intercession for us, we cannot doubt of the grace and favor of God toward us.

Moreover, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, as Paul here saith. But Christ is most certain that He pleaseth God: therefore we also, having the Spirit of Christ, must be assured that we are under grace for His sake who is most assured. This I have said concerning the inward testimony, whereby a Christian man's heart ought to be fully persuaded that he is under grace, and hath the Holy Ghost. Now, the outward signs . . . are gladly to hear of Christ, to preach and teach Christ, to render thanks unto Him, to praise Him, to confess Him, yea, if need be, with the loss of goods and life: also, to do our duty according to our vocation, as we are able: to do it in faith, joy, and cheerfulness. Not to thrust ourselves into another man's vocation, but to stand upon our own, to help our needy brother, to comfort the heavy-hearted. By these signs, as by effects and consequences, we are fully assured and confirmed that we are in God's favor. . . .

Here we may see what great infirmity is yet in the flesh of the godly. For if we could be fully persuaded that we are under grace, that our sins are forgiven, that we have the Spirit of Christ, and are the children of God, then, doubtless we should be joyful, and thankful to God for this inestimable gift. But because we feel contrary motions, that is, fear, doubt, and heaviness of heart, therefore we cannot assure ourselves hereof: yea, our conscience judgeth it a great presumption and pride to challenge this glory. Wherefore, if we will understand this thing rightly, and as we should do, we must put it in practice: for without experience and practice it can never be learned.

Let every man, then, so practise with himself, that his conscience may be fully assured that he is under grace, and that his person and his works do please God. And if he feel any wavering or doubting, let him exercise his faith, and wrestle against it, and labor to attain more strength and assurance of faith, so that he may be able to say, "I know that I am accepted," and that I have the Holy Ghost: not for mine own worthiness, work, or merit, but for Christ's sake, who of His love towards us made Himself subject to the law, and took

away the sins of the world. In Him do I believe. If I am a sinner, and err, He is righteous, and cannot err. Moreover, I gladly hear, read, write, and sing of Him, and desire nothing more than that His gospel may be known to the whole world, and that many may be converted to Him. These things do plainly witness that the Holy Ghost is present with us and in us. For such things are not wrought in the heart by man's strength, nor gotten by man's industry or travail, but are obtained by Christ alone, who first maketh us righteous by the knowledge of Himself in His holy gospel, and afterwards createth a new heart in us, bringing forth new motions, and giveth unto us that assurance, whereby we are persuaded that we please the Father for His sake. Also He giveth us a true judgment, whereby we prove and try those things which before we knew not, or else altogether despised.

## 54

## Revolt of the Flesh

*Commentary on Galatians 5:17*  
Translated by MIDDLETON

"Revolt of the Flesh" is a sober realization that—try as we may—we shall never be assured against all manners of temptation, for "sin is couching at our door" all the time. Paul complained of this, and so did Luther and so do we. It would be unfair and pointless to link Luther's anxiety to his alleged lack of asceticism. Already Staupitz had warned him that even vows are of little help. All a Christian can do is humbly to acknowledge his weakness and commit himself into God's hands.

LET no man despair if he feel the flesh oftentimes to stir up a new battle against the spirit, or if he cannot by-and-by subdue the flesh, and make it obedient to the spirit. I do also

wish myself to have a more valiant and constant heart, which might be able, not only boldly to condemn the threatenings of tyrants, the heresies, offenses, and tumults, which Satan and his soldiers, the enemies of the gospel, stir up; but might also by-and-by shake off the vexations and anguish of spirit, and briefly, might not fear the sharpness of death, but receive and embrace it, as a most friendly guest. But I find another law in my members rebelling against the law of my mind. Some other do wrestle with inferior temptations, as poverty, reproach, impatience and such like. Paul's words concerning this battle of flesh and spirit, are as if he would say: It is impossible for you to follow the guiding of the spirit in all things, without any hindrance of the flesh, for the flesh will resist and hinder you, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Therefore, when a man feeleth this battle of the flesh, let him not be discouraged therewith, but let him resist in spirit, and let him say: I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me; for I have not yet put off the flesh, in which sin dwelleth so long as it liveth. But I will obey the spirit, and not the flesh, that is, I will by faith and hope lay hold of Christ, and by His word I will raise up myself, and being so raised up, I will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

To know this is very profitable for the godly. When I was a monk I used to think I was utterly cast away, if at any time I felt the lust of the flesh; that is, if I felt any envy, wrath, hatred of my brother, or any fleshly lust. If I had but known the truth set out in this place by Paul, I should not have so miserably tormented myself, but should have reasoned thus: Martin, thou art not without sin, for thou hast flesh: thou shalt therefore feel the battle thereof, according to that saying, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

I remember that Staupitz used to say: "I have vowed God a thousand times, that I would become a better man; but I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow; for I have now learned by experience that I am not able to perform it. Unless, therefore, God be favorable and merciful unto me, for Christ's sake, and grant unto me a blessed and

a happy hour, when I shall depart out of this miserable life, I shall not be able, with all my vows and all my good deeds, to stand before Him." Thus they must all confess who will be saved. For the godly, not trusting in their own righteousness, say with David: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Ps. 143:2).

**Jacob Boehme  
1575-1624****55****Inspired Writing**

This selection, taken from Boehme's correspondence, describes how he was urged by the Spirit to write down his experiences, in spite of his illiteracy. With Boehme, "illiteracy" meant that he had had no schooling and that his penmanship was poor. His was a marked case of "automatic writing."

From a letter to Caspar Lindnern, 1622

I SHALL not hide from you the simple way of the children, in which I walk in Christ. For I can write nothing of myself except as of a child which knows nothing, understands nothing, and has never learned anything else, but that which the Lord wants me to know, in the manner in which He manifests Himself in me. I never desired to know something of the divine mystery; much less did I understand how to seek and to find it; of this I knew nothing at all, for such is the lot of laymen in their simplicity. I sought only after the heart of Jesus Christ, that I might hide myself in it from the anger and wrath of God and from the attacks of the devil; I prayed earnestly to God for His Holy Spirit and His grace, that He would bless me and guide me in Him, that He would take away from me that which turned me from Him, and that I might surrender totally to Him, and thus live not to my own will but to His; would He only lead me, that I might become His child in Jesus Christ His son.

In this my most earnest seeking and desire (wherein I suffered mighty blows, but was ready to expose my life rather than to leave off or to give up), the Gate was opened to me, and in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been to college for many a year, at which I greatly marvelled, not knowing what happened to me, and thereupon I set my heart to praise God.

Next it came strongly to my mind to write down all these things for a memorial, although I could grasp them only with the utmost difficulty in my external self and have them flow down my pen. I had to start labouring in this exceedingly great mystery like a child which goes to school. In my inner self I saw everything indeed, but as in a great deep; it was as if I were looking into chaos; all things were there, but I could not unravel them. Yet things opened in me from time to time in the manner of plants. I went about for some twelve years, as if I were pregnant, and I had to make a violent effort before I could bring anything forth, until it all came suddenly like a shower of rain: where it falls, it falls. And so it was with me: whatever I could grasp and bring in the open, that I wrote down.

From a letter to Abraham von Sommerfeld  
und Falckenheim, 1620

.... Should Your Worship desire to have some copy made from the writings which were sent herewith, the writer would feel distressed, being an uneducated, unskilled man, for the syllabs are not all well enough penned, nor according to grammar. It may be also that letters are wanting in many words, or that an ordinary letter was put in place of a capital, for art has not written these. Nor was there time at all to think of the right meaning of the letter, but all was set down following the move of the spirit, which often went so fast that my hands did shake, unaccustomed to writing as they were. And though I could have written more nicely and clearly, the reason I did not is this, That the burning fire often drives one too fast, and the hand and pen must hasten after it; for it comes as a shower of rain, which falls where it falls. If it were ever possible to

grasp and write down everything, it all would rest on foundations three times better and deeper; but that is not possible, and thus more than one book was made, more than one philosophy, so that whatever is not fully understood in one philosophy, may be found in another.

## 56

## Trials of a Resolute Soul

*The Way to Christ: Of True Repentance*, No. 21-24  
German text by SCHIEBLER

Here is Boehme's practical advice to all tempted and discouraged souls: Be steadfast in your resolutions, for you have in yourself the power to conquer.

I WILL not hide from the beloved reader who is resolute to live a Christian life, how it usually goes with those who have thus resolved, although it does not go quite the same with the one and with the other, according to the earnestness and intensity of their resolution. For the Spirit of God is not bound, but uses divers ways, as He knows every one's case. Yet who has been in the wars is able to talk fighting, that he may instruct those who may have to go.

Now if such a heart comes before God with a firm resolution and enters into repentance, it happens to him as to the Canaanitish woman (Matt. 15:22); it is as if God would not hear. The heart of this man remains without comfort; to which add that his sins, his unworthiness, are likely to present themselves before his eyes, and so he feels utterly worthless; his mind is as it were dumb; the soul groans in its depth; the heart loses all feeling, nor can it even pour out its confession before God; it is just as if the heart and soul of this man were shut up. His soul might be willing, but the flesh keeps it captive. The devil keeps after him with always new pictures of the way of vanity, tickling him with the lusts of the flesh, and saying to his heart:

"Tarry a while; do this or that first; get yourself a provision of money, in order not to stand in need of the world, and then you may go in for a holy life, for repentance; 'twill be time enough."

O how many hundreds perish in such a beginning if they go back to vanity! They are like a tender little shoot which is broken off with the wind or withered by the heat.

Hear this, beloved soul: if thou wilt challenge Death and Hell in Christ thy Saviour, if thou wouldest thy tender little shoot to grow into a tree in the kingdom of Christ, then thou must stand fast in thy first, earnest resolution; 'tis thine ancient paternal inheritance is at stake, together with thy body and soul: to be an angel in God, or a devil in hell.

## 57

### A Soul Ablaze with the Spirit

*The Way to Christ: Of True Resignation*, Chap. 1, No. 28-31  
German text by SCHIEBLER

Boehme uses the analogy of the fire, dear to Hugh of St. Victor, to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. We have in this passage a tolerable sample of Boehme's theory of how the faculties of man, the microcosm, correspond with the elements and divisions of the macrocosm. In spite of the incoherence of the metaphors, this doctrine makes sense. But in many other instances Boehme overloads the exposition of his spiritual doctrine with undigested Paracelsian phantasmagory.

**W**HEN the Spirit of God goes up as a fire and a flame of love, then the spirit of the soul goes down and says: "Lord, to Thy name be the glory, not to me; Thou art mighty to take to Thyself virtue, power, strength, wisdom, and

knowledge; do what Thou wilt, I can do nothing, I know nothing, I will go nowhere unless Thou carry me as a tool; do in me and with me what Thou wilt."

In the humility of this total surrender, the spark of the divine virtue falls as a firebrand into the center of the structure of life, that is, the fire of life which Adam has made in himself to be like a black piece of coal, and there it glimmers. And as soon as the light of the divine virtue has kindled itself, the creature, as it were an instrument of the divine Spirit, must go forward and proclaim what the Spirit of God speaks, and then the creature owns itself no more, but is the tool of God.

But even in this fiery drive, the will of the soul must unceasingly sink into nothingness, that is, into the deepest humility before God. For no sooner does the soul make the slightest effort to go on with its own pursuits, Lucifer lays hold of it in the center of the structure of life, and sifts it to make it re-enter its self-centeredness. The soul must keep on depending on its humble surrender like a rivulet depends on its spring; it must without ceasing draw and drink from God's fountain, and never think of departing from the ways of God.

For as soon as the soul feeds upon its self-centeredness, upon the light of its own sense, it moves by strength of its own folly, and its object, which it sets forth for divine, belongs only in the outer constellation which soon lays hold of the soul and makes it drunk. And then the soul rushes amidst falsehood, until it surrenders anew and gives itself up, acknowledges itself again to be an unclean child, resists its own sense, and so regains the love of God, which is indeed harder to do than it had been at first, for now the devil brings in strong doubts and will not easily leave his haunt.

Johann Georg Hamann  
1730-1788

58

## Biblical Breakthrough

*Gedanken über meinen Lebenslauf*  
Nadler edition, vol. II, pp. 39-40

"Biblical Breakthrough" acquaints us with what has been called Hamann's "Biblicism," to use this term without the derogative connotation of unintelligent literalism. For Hamann the Bible is the authentic record of God's provisions for the salvation of mankind. Now the same Spirit which inspired the recorders becomes Light and Force in those who are willing to receive the record and to live by it. Hence the facts of Hebrew history awaken a living echo in the human heart, and God speaks to us from beyond the deeds of the past.

**I**N THE TUMULT of all my passions, which shook me so that often I was not able to catch my breath, I always prayed to God for a friend, a wise, faithful friend, whose image I knew no more; instead I had tasted, and tasted to satiety, the gall of false friendship, and I had given up every desire of improvement. To have a friend who would be able to give me the key to my own heart, the thread to guide me out of my labyrinth, was a wish I made often without perceiving nor understanding its contents rightly.

God be praised! I have found this friend in my heart; He entered silently, while I felt my heart's utter emptiness, gloom, and desolation. At some earlier time, I had read the Old Testa-

ment once from end to end and the New Testament twice, if I am not mistaken. Now I wanted to start all over again, and it seemed to me as if I became aware of an opaque veil over my mind and heart, which had kept the Book shut from me on the first time. So I set out to read it with a greater concentration, more in order and with more hunger, and I decided to write down the thoughts which would come into my mind.

I began promptly on the thirteenth of March (1758), with a more sincere intention than in the past, although my idea of the Word of God as I undertook this reading was still most imperfect and far from clear. Yet, the further I read, the newer it was to me, and I perceived more and more the contents and efficacy of Scripture as divine. This made me forget all my books; I was ashamed either to have compared them with the Book of God, or to have set them side by side with it, or even to have preferred one or the other of them to it. I discovered the unity of the divine will in the redemption by Jesus Christ; that all the histories, all the wonders, all the commandments and works of God tended toward a central objective, namely to lead the souls of men out of the bondage, service, blindness, folly and deadliness of sin, unto the greatest happiness and the highest beatitude, unto the partaking of such goods that we should tremble at their greatness still more than at our unworthiness or our inability to make ourselves worthy of them, should they be revealed to us. I recognized my own guilt in the history of the Jewish people; I read there the course of my own life, and I gave thanks to God for His patience with His chosen people, for nothing short of such an example could possibly justify my entertaining a similar hope. Above all else, I discovered in the Books of Moses this extraordinary fact, that the Israelites, whom we regard as a most uncouth people, in some instances sought nothing else from God but that which it was God's intention that they should do; also, that they were prompt to recognize their disobedience as vividly as a contrite sinner ever did, and yet forsook their repentance just as soon; and that, while in the pangs of remorse, they clamored for no less than a Redeemer, an Advocate, a Mediator, without whom they could neither fear nor love God

rightly. While being engaged in these considerations, which seemed to me quite heavy with mystery, on the thirty-first of March in the evening, I read the fifth chapter of the fifth Book of Moses and, absorbed in a deep meditation, I thought of Abel, concerning whom God said (to Cain) : "The earth has opened its mouth to receive the blood of thy brother" (Gen. 4:11). I felt my heart beating, I heard a voice in its depth, a moaning and groaning, as if it were the voice of a murdered brother who would avenge his blood, although I did not hear it at times and would continue to stop up my ears against it—that very voice which had made Cain a wanderer and a fugitive. All of a sudden I felt my heart swell up like a spring of water and burst into tears, and I could no longer, no longer hide from my God that I was my brother's murderer, the murderer of my Brother, His only begotten Son. The Spirit of God went on and on, in spite of my great weakness, in spite of the long resistance which I had thus far opposed to its witness and to its impulse, revealing more and more unto me the mystery of God's love and the great benefit of faith in our gracious and only Savior.

## 59

## The Holy Spirit, the Comforter

*Gedanken über meinen Lebenslauf*

Nadler edition, vol. II, pp. 41-42

This is Hamann's profession of faith in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. The passage was written during one of the dark hours of his sojourn in London, when he had really "hit bottom." He sensed that God was reaching for him, and then a total stranger helped him unexpectedly out of his predicament and made possible his return to Germany.

Now I feel my heart, praise be to God, more at rest than I ever did in my life. In the moments in which my low spirits were willing to rise, I have been flooded with a consolation, the source of which I cannot ascribe to myself, and which no man could possibly impart to his neighbor in this superabundance. I am awed at the very excess of it; it has swallowed up all fear, all gloom, all distrust, to the extent that I could not find the slightest trace of these in my heart. I pray to God, that He deign to bless the work which He has begun in me, namely my weak faith, through His Word and Spirit, His own gracious, superabundant Spirit; the Spirit of peace which passes all understanding, indeed not of such a peace as the world may give; the Spirit of love without which we are nothing but the enemies of God (and whoever hates his benefactor, how can he possibly love, in this passing world?); the Spirit of hope which will never put us to shame, unlike the shadow play of our carnal imagination.

If I have thus received from God the great gifts, the priceless pearl, the award in view of which He has allowed me to be born, how could I now doubt that He governs my whole life? The very end of it is achieved. I abandon myself to His will, which is wise and alone is good.

## 60

## Hamann's Signature

*Das letzte Blatt*  
Nadler edition, vol. III, p. 410

Hamann's last testimony to Christianity was written thirteen days before his death, for Princess Galitzin. This untranslatable document consists of pointed ironies, often self-addressed, together with a Latin paraphrase of essential verses from the Vulgate. I have reproduced, as far as possible, Hamann's

disconcerting punctuation and his capitalization of key words.

THROUGH the study of nature (in a mirror, dimly), a few wise men have attained to the ideal vision of a Supreme Being (?) and Reason (?)—but it is only in the *Etymological Origins* of the Gospel that his humanity, power and wisdom are seen (face to face). To the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles a folly 1 Cor. 1:23-24. What is foolish, lowly, despised, is just what GOD chose to share, that the wise be confounded. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female. All—One, *παντας*—Eis, Gal. 3:28. The old has passed away, behold, all things have been made new 2 Cor. 5:17 through HIM who said: I am Alpha and Omega Apoc. 21:6. Prophets will stop, tongues will cease, science will be shattered, when that which is perfect and final shall come. In the beginning was the word and the light and the true life of men, but darkness comprehended him not, the world made by him recognized him not. And GOD was made flesh—the only-begotten son, in the bosom of the father, who has nourished him of his substance, who has declared himself to HIM. Being made in the likeness of the sons of the earth, he learned from them what he suffered Hebr. 5:8. His Passion, *παθημata*, is our Instruction, *μαθημata*, and the Supreme Morals, *ηθικa μεγαλa*. As in times past even so now, Rom. 11:30-31.

From one who is between dusk and dark, a hypocrite in reverse, an ancient and authentic sophist, a stone on two legs, at times used as a whetstone, although it could not possibly cut, a "Metacritic" of good hope, a philosopher and a bold head, a pitchfork and cross-bearer Rom. 9:20-21. A lump of potter's clay, a jug shaped at the potter's will, while the potter's wheel turns out the next one, to the honor and glory of both, an imitator of the exalted language of the Lord, convinced that salvation 2 Pet. 3:15 and God's mercy are the only sufficient rationale of all religion, a scatterer of words Acts 17:18.

JOHANN GEORG HAMANN  
Münster, the 18th of May 88, Vigil of Trinity Sunday

## From the Renaissance Onward: France

FRENCH Christianity, during the period extending from the Renaissance to the fall of the monarchy, did not show the homogeneity characteristic of Hispanic or German Christianity. On the contrary, it was marked by the ebb and flow of competing religious currents. The first of these is the French Reformation. It had been preceded by an evangelical movement which developed in the bosom of the Catholic Church and was centered around a small group of thinkers who unfortunately were not leaders. Once Rome manifested her opposition to what was regarded as just another brand of Lutheranism, the Reformation proper took place, and the personality of Calvin put its indelible stamp on French Protestantism.

Counter-Reformation Catholicism in France was far from united, politically—for instance on the question of so-called Gallican liberties—and spiritually. The devout humanism of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which François de Sales represents at its best, soon degenerated into a shallow religiosity, and at times into threadbare ethics, while the theology of the Jesuits (by stressing above all the power of the human will and the ability of man to decide for the good) was dangerously courting Semipelagianism—“Semi” to be polite.

Hence, the reaction of the Jansenists of Port Royal. Their spirituality, best illustrated by the person and the writings of

Pascal, rests on a strictly theological foundation; it clings to Scripture and is fiercely Augustinian, stressing the awesome mystery of the divine initiative of grace, to which no reason can possibly be assigned and without which no man can be saved.

A new trend in piety, more loosely connected with the essential themes of Catholic theology, began to appear toward the end of the seventeenth century. The accent was on religious experience—the presence of God actually *felt* by the soul—and man's motivation for loving God. The link with the "Christian disinterestedness" of the earlier mystics, a doctrine which tradition sustains, is obvious. Did not the Apostle Paul exclaim that "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren"? (Rom. 9:3.) In the same manner a companion of Loyola, Francis Xavier, protested his love for God "not for the sake of winning heaven, not with the hope of gaining aught, nor seeking a reward." Such utterances were built into an elaborate theory of so-called "pure love," of which Fénelon was the chief protagonist and victim. It conceals, beneath the damnable oversystematization known as quietism, sound spiritual values somehow lost (if not actually denied) by the major theologians and controversialists of the time.

We open the series with John Calvin, who was born at Noyon, Picardy, in 1509. His father, a solicitor in the bishop's court, wanted him to become a lawyer—a natural move, and besides, Picards love the atmosphere of courtrooms. The young man was granted church preferment as a means of sustentation. He studied the arts in Paris, law in the schools of Orléans and Bourges. He shared the curiosity of his fellow students for religious innovations, and came into contact with a German Lutheran, Wolmar, who taught him Greek and under whose influence he shifted his interest from law to the study of Christian sources. After the death of his father in 1531, he ran into trouble with the bishop and the chapter of Noyon. He resigned his benefice and incurred censures on account of

a discourse which he wrote and which his friend Nicolas Cop, elected rector of the faculties of arts in Paris, was to deliver—it was indeed an undisguised manifesto for evangelical Christianity. After several months of rustication at Angoulême and at Nérac, where many free lances found shelter at the court of Marguerite de Navarre, sister of the French king, he left France. He sojourned in Basel, where he published the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. After a short journey to Italy, Guillaume Farel prevailed on him to help in the reformation of the Church at Geneva. But he had to flee the city in 1538, the then leading faction of the libertines having their own idea of religious freedom: freedom from, not through, religion. From 1538 to 1541 he ministered to the French in Strasbourg; and, being called back to Geneva, he worked there—organizing the government of the city, the Church, and the college—until his death in 1564.

Calvin's theology is more formal than Luther's. Its two poles are the absolute sovereignty of God and the revelation of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, the authoritative record of which is found in the Bible. It is a common and serious mistake to reduce the theology of Calvin to logical predestinarianism, which is only a part, and certainly not the best part, of it. As a matter of fact, the theology of salvation, as presented in the *Institutes*, is inseparable from Calvin's principles of spirituality. I have, therefore, selected a few passages from Book III, in which Calvin analyzes the Christian way of life, once man has been reborn of the Spirit through faith and repentance.

Let us enjoy the pleasure of having the Bishop of Geneva (in exile) follow the Geneva Reformer in this survey. François de Roussy de Sales, the best representative of Counter Reformation humanism in France, was born in 1567, in the Château de Sales near Thorens, some fifteen miles south of Geneva as the crow flies. He studied humanities and philosophy in the College of Clermont, which the Jesuits had founded in Paris in 1561, and he took up law at the University of Padua, Italy.

He was back in Savoy in 1592, as an advocate before the senate of Chambéry. Meanwhile he had taken a lively and personal interest in religion. After a few months at Chambéry, he was nominated provost of the Cathedral Chapter of Geneva, in exile at Annecy, and was ordained a priest. In 1599 he was appointed coadjutor to the Bishop of Geneva, whom he succeeded in 1602, with residence at Annecy. His spiritual association with Jeanne François Frémion de Chantal, a noble widow from Burgundy who became the founder of the Order of the Visitation, coincides with the climax of his literary activity. He died at Lyons in 1622.

The two major works of François de Sales are the *Treatise on the Love of God* and the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. The former is an analysis of the nature, motives and manifestations of Christian love; it displays the optimism of a humanist, confident of the power of human nature to correspond to grace. The latter is a practical method of devotion, "devotion" being defined as "a will that is constant, resolute, prompt, and active to do whatever we know to be pleasing to God." It is written not for monks, not for nuns, not for candidates to a Church vocation, but—and this is a new note in Catholic spiritual literature—for men and women living "in the world." This for the reason that "it is an error, or rather a heresy, to try to banish the devout life from the regiment of soldiers, the shop of the mechanic, the court of princes, or the home of married folks." In spite of the author's intention, it is not likely that the *Introduction*, with its sophisticated similes and its flowery style, was ever very popular with Fanfan-la-Tulipe or his sergeant, or with the village blacksmith.

Blaise Pascal, whom we have singled out to represent Jansenism at its best, was born at Clermont-Ferrand, Auvergne, in 1623. His father, who was second president of the "Cour des Aides," moved subsequently to Paris and to Rouen, where he held various offices and cared personally for the education of his children. Jansenism came to the Pascal family as the father was visited on his sickbed by two Jansenist healers in 1646.

He passed away the following year. Blaise Pascal moved back to Paris and devoted himself to scientific research. A series of psychological shocks caused by external events ended with a religious experience of ecstatic nature, recorded in the so-called *Memorial*, and dated November 23, 1654. Shortly afterward, Pascal retired among the "Messieurs" of Port Royal and undertook in the *Provincial Letters* the defense of the Jansenist doctrine of grace against the theologians of the Company of Jesus. Then he started to work on a grandiose project—an *Apology of the Christian Religion*, the elements of which, jotted down on odd scraps of paper as inspiration drove him, were published after his death in 1662.

The spirituality of Pascal shares in the austerity of the theology of Port Royal. It originates in an awe-inspiring experience of the holiness of God, the God of Sinai. This does not preclude by any means an ardent love, but Pascal's love is never familiar nor tender, at least in its outward expression. This will readily appear from the two passages which we have selected for their value as personal testimonies.

The spiritual experience of Brother Lawrence—his name at birth was Nicholas Hermann—is particularly interesting because he was no theologian but, on the contrary, a wholly unsophisticated man. We know next to nothing about the circumstances of his life. He was born about 1605 at Herimesnil in Lorraine, served for years as a soldier, and became a lay brother in the Parisian monastery of the Carmelite Fathers, where he died in 1691.

Some of his conversations with the fathers and brothers of the order were recorded by Monsieur de Beaufort, grand vicar of Louis Antoine de Noailles, Bishop of Châlons (later Archbishop of Paris and Cardinal). This prelate was affected with a mild case of quietism, from which he recovered promptly when Madame de Maintenon marked her disapproval. As for Brother Lawrence in his monastery kitchen, he can hardly be called a quietist, in the technical sense of the word. His was the normal disinterestedness of a Christian who has learned to

cast all his cares on the Lord. He trusted God to help him run the errands of the Father Procurator, who sent him once to buy a barrel of Burgundy for the community. He knew also from experience that God is ever present with His grace, and mighty to save. The man was totally unconventional. Being asked one day who his director was, he answered "that he had none, and that he did not think he needed one." How refreshing!

In comparison with Brother Lawrence, Fénelon is a down-right quietist, although he never went to the extremes of the doctrine professed by Molinos (1640-1696) and Madame Guyon (1648-1717). François de Salignac de La Mothe was born in the family manor of Fénelon in Gascony, in 1651. He was brought up from early youth for an ecclesiastical career, studied at the Seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris, and was ordained a priest in 1674. His first assignment was to a foundation for female converts. Next he engaged in a preaching mission in the province of Saintonge, which had long been a stronghold of Protestantism. In 1689 he was invited to the court and became the tutor of the Duke of Burgundy (grandson of Louis XIV), continuing in this office in spite of his elevation to the archiepiscopal see of Cambrai in 1695. He had been won to quietism by Madame Guyon as early as 1688, and this association with the sincere, but overzealous and ever-intriguing lady ultimately caused his disgrace. He left the court in 1697 and retired to his archbishopric. His book *Maximes des Saints*, a plea for quietism, was condemned by Rome in 1699. Fénelon officially submitted. He died in 1715.

Quietism was essentially a reaction against the activism of Jesuit spirituality, and against the conception of religion as a mere device for escaping punishment and earning a well-deserved reward: the cliché *faire son salut*, "working out one's own salvation," belongs to this superficial Christianity. As so often happens in theological matters, the pendulum swung back too far. In its extreme forms, the mysticism of the quietists tended to by-pass the necessary human activity in the life

of prayer, and replaced it by an artificial silence and absence of desire—the age-old error of all those who confuse the annihilation of the sinful self with the blank inertia of nothingness. The quietists regarded man's desire for salvation as a base motive, on which one had better spread a veil of discretion. Fénelon never indulged in such exaggerations. His understanding of spiritual life remained generally within the bounds assigned by theology and the experience of the great mystics. He taught that we must take no heed of whether or not God shall save us, but that we must love Him all the same. He was positive that we ought "always to hope, desire, and pray for our salvation, since God wills it, and would have us also will it, in order to His glory." The three selected passages of the *Avis et Instructions* are characteristic samples of Fénelon's theory of the state of pure love.

John Calvin  
1509-1564

61

## The Way of Self-Denial

*Institutes*, III, 7, 1  
Translated by BEVERIDGE

This passage shows the reciprocal relationship which binds together Christian commitment and self-denial. Spiritual life is described as oscillating perpetually between two poles: the negative "we are not our own," and the positive "we are God's."

ALTHOUGH the Law of God contains a perfect rule of conduct admirably arranged, it has seemed proper to our divine Master to train His people by a more accurate method, to the rule which is enjoined in the Law; and the leading principle in the method is, that it is the duty of believers to present their "bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). Hence he draws the exhortation: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The great point is that we are consecrated and dedicated to God, and, therefore, should not henceforth think, speak, design, or act, without a view to His glory. What He has made sacred cannot, without signal insult to Him, be applied to profane use. But if we are not our own, but the Lord's, it is plain both what error is to be shunned, and to what end the actions of our lives ought to be directed. We are not our own; therefore, neither is our own reason or will to rule our acts and counsels. We are not our own; therefore, let us not make it our end to seek what may be agreeable to our

carnal nature. We are not our own; therefore, as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours. On the other hand, we are God's; let us, therefore, live and die to Him. We are God's; therefore, let His wisdom and will preside over all our actions. We are God's; to Him, then, as the only legitimate end, let every part of our life be directed. O how great the proficiency of him who, taught that he is not his own, has withdrawn the dominion and government of himself from his own reason that he may give them to God! For as the surest source of destruction to men is to obey themselves, so the only haven of safety is to have no other will, no other wisdom, than to follow the Lord wherever He leads. Let this, then, be the first step, to abandon ourselves, and devote the whole energy of our minds to the service of God. By service, I mean not only that which consists in verbal obedience, but that by which the mind, divested of its own carnal feelings, implicitly obeys the call of the Spirit of God. This transformation, which Paul calls "the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23), though it is the first entrance to life, was unknown to all the philosophers. They give the government of man to reason alone, thinking that she alone is to be listened to; in short, they assign to her the sole direction of the conduct. But Christian philosophy bids her give place, and yield complete submission to the Holy Spirit, so that the man himself no longer lives, but Christ lives and reigns in him (Gal. 2:20).

## 62

### The Eighth Beatitude

*Institutes*, III, 8, 7  
Translated by BEVERIDGE

This is an exposition on the beatitude of those persecuted for righteousness' sake. Even Calvin's devoted followers will have to admit that he scarcely had a personal experience of persecution. Of course

he had to play several times the *fabulam ambulatoriam*—that is, translating the Latin slang by its American equivalent, “to scram”—and the Genevan libertines called him names. But his experiences do not compare with the tribulations of the Huguenots, who would seek refuge in Prussia and the Netherlands and even in the “desert,” and who, if caught, would be sentenced to pull oars on His Christian Majesty’s galleys—for life. Calvin also happened to be among the persecutors of Servetus; but be that as it may, the passage as written is pertinent.

**T**HREE is singular consolation when we are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. For our thought should then be, how high the honor which God bestows upon us in distinguishing us by the special badge of His soldiers. By suffering persecution for righteousness’ sake, I mean not only striving for the defence of the Gospel, but for the defence of righteousness in any way. Whether, therefore, in maintaining the truth of God against the lies of Satan, or defending the good and innocent against the injuries of the bad, we are obliged to incur the offense and hatred of the world, so as to endanger life, fortune, or honor, let us not grieve or decline so far to spend ourselves for God; let us not think ourselves wretched in those things in which He with his own lips has pronounced us blessed (Matt. 5:10). Poverty, indeed, considered in itself, is misery; so are exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy: in fine, death itself is the last of all calamities. But when the favor of God breathes upon it, there is none of these things which may not turn out to our happiness. Let us then be contented with the testimony of Christ rather than with the false estimate of the flesh, and then, after the example of the Apostles, we will rejoice in being “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). For why? If, while conscious of our innocence, we are deprived of our substance by the wickedness of man, we are, no doubt, humanly speaking, reduced to poverty; but in truth our riches in heaven are increased; if driven from our homes,

we have a more welcome reception into the family of God; if vexed and despised, we are more firmly rooted in Christ; if stigmatised by disgrace and ignominy, we have a higher place in the kingdom of God; and if we are slain, entrance is hereby given us to eternal life. The Lord having set such a price upon us, let us be ashamed to estimate ourselves at less than the shadowy and evanescent allurements of the present life.

## 63

## The Obedience of God's Children

*Institutes*, III, 19, 4-5  
Translated by BEVERIDGE

The following selection is a plea for obedience to the law and is written in a nonlegalistic spirit—an amazing feat for a French jurist. Calvin explodes the distinction—dear to Catholic moralists but odious to mystics—between imperfection and sin. The passage concludes with a statement of the necessity for the Christian to give himself up to God's mercy.

CHRISTIANS obey the Law, not as if compelled by legal necessity; but being free from the yoke of the Law itself, voluntarily obey the will of God. Being constantly in terror so long as they are under the dominion of the Law, they are never disposed promptly to obey God, unless they have previously obtained this liberty. Our meaning shall be explained more briefly and clearly by an example. The command of the Law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5). To accomplish this, the soul must previously be divested of every other thought and feeling, the heart purified from all its de-

sires, all its powers collected and united on this one object. Those who, in comparison of others, have made much progress in the way of the Lord, are still very far from this goal. For although they love God in their mind, and with a sincere affection of heart, yet both are still in a great measure occupied with the lusts of the flesh, by which they are retarded and prevented from proceeding with quickened pace toward God. They indeed make many efforts, but the flesh partly enfeebles their strength, and partly binds them to itself. What can they do while they thus feel that there is nothing of which they are less capable than to fulfill the Law? They wish, aspire, endeavor; but do nothing with the requisite perfection. If they look to the Law, they see that every work which they attempt or design is accursed. Nor can any one deceive himself by inferring that the work is not altogether bad, merely because it is imperfect, and, therefore, that any good which is in it is still accepted of God. For the Law demanding perfect love condemns all imperfection, unless its rigor is mitigated. Let any man therefore consider his work which he wishes to be thought partly good, and he will find that it is a transgression of the Law by the very circumstance of its being imperfect.

See how our works lie under the curse of the Law if they are tested by the standard of the Law. But how can unhappy souls set themselves with alacrity to a work from which they cannot hope to gain anything in return but cursing? On the other hand, if freed from this severe exaction, or rather from the whole rigor of the Law, they hear themselves invited by God with paternal lenity, they will cheerfully and alertly obey the call, and follow his guidance. In one word, those who are bound by the yoke of the Law are like servants who have certain tasks daily assigned them by their masters. Such servants think that nought has been done; and they dare not come into the presence of their masters until the exact amount of labor has been performed. But sons who are treated in a more candid and liberal manner by their parents, hesitate not to offer them works that are only begun or half finished, or even with some faults in them, trusting that their obedience and readiness of

mind will be accepted, although the performance be less exact than was wished. Such should be our feelings, as we certainly trust that our most indulgent Parent will approve our services, however small they may be, and however rude and imperfect. Thus He declares to us by the prophet, "I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him" (Mal. 3:17), where the word "spare" evidently means indulgence, or connivance at faults, while at the same time service is remembered.

François de Sales  
1567-1622

64

## Profession of Allegiance

*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Book I, Chap. 20  
Translated by J. K. RYAN

"Profession of Allegiance" is a dramatized expression of the decision of a soul ready to surrender to Christ. It takes the form of a vow of allegiance taken in the presence of a priest, confessor or spiritual director. The influence of Loyola is quite perceptible: the pledge of allegiance corresponds to the enlistment of the Christian soldier in the "Meditation on the Two Standards."

I THE UNDERSIGNED, standing in the presence of the eternal God and the whole court of heaven, having considered the infinite mercy of His divine goodness toward me, a most unworthy and wretched creature, whom He has created out of nothing, preserved, supported and delivered from so many dangers, and loaded with so many benefits; but considering, above all, the incomprehensible sweetness and mercy with which this most good God has so graciously borne my iniquities; so frequently and so lovingly inspired and urged me to amendment, and so patiently waited for my repentance and conversion until this —th year of my life, notwithstanding all my ingratitude, disloyalty, and infidelity, by which I have

so shamelessly offended Him, delaying my conversion and despising His grace; having, moreover, reflected that upon the day of my holy baptism I was so fortunately and holily vowed and dedicated to God to be His child; and that, contrary to the profession then made in my name, I have so greatly and so often, so execrably and so detestably, profaned and violated my soul, applying and employing it against the divine Majesty; at length, returning to myself, prostrate in heart and in spirit before the throne of divine justice, I acknowledge, avow, and confess myself lawfully attainted and convicted of treason against the divine Majesty, and guilty of the death and Passion of Jesus Christ, on account of the sins I have committed, for which He died and suffered the torment of the cross; so that consequently I deserve to be cast away and condemned forever.

Turning myself toward the throne of the infinite mercy of the same eternal God, and having detested with my whole heart and with my whole strength the many iniquities of my past life, I ask and humbly beg grace, and pardon, and mercy, with an entire absolution from my crime by virtue of the death and Passion of the same Lord and Redeemer of my soul. Relying on this as on the only foundation of my hope, I confirm again and renew the sacred profession of allegiance to my God, made in my behalf at my baptism; renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh; detesting their base suggestions, vanities, and concupiscences for all the time of my present life and for all eternity. Turning myself toward my most gracious and merciful God, I desire, purpose, determine, and am irrevocably resolved to serve and love Him now and forever. To this end, I give and consecrate to Him my spirit with all its faculties, my soul with all its powers, my heart with all its affections, and my body with all its senses, protesting that I will never more abuse any part of my being against His divine will and sovereign Majesty, to whom I offer up and sacrifice myself in spirit, to be forever His loyal, obedient, and faithful creature, without ever revoking or repenting this my act and deed. But if, alas, I should chance, through the suggestion of the enemy, or through human frailty, to transgress in any point, or fail in

adhering to this my resolution and dedication, I protest from this moment, and am determined, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to rise as soon as I shall perceive my fall, and return again to the divine mercy, without any sloth or delay whatsoever.

This is my will, my intention, and my unbreakable and irrevocable resolution, which I declare and confirm without reservation or exception, in the same sacred presence of God, in the sight of the Church triumphant, and in the presence of the Church militant, my mother, which hears this my declaration in the person of him who, as her officer, hears me in this action. May it please Thee, O my God, eternal, almighty, and all-good, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to confirm in me this resolution, and to accept in the odor of sweetness this inward sacrifice of my heart. And as it has pleased Thee to grant me the inspiration and the will to do this, so grant me the strength and the grace needed to perform it. "O my God, Thou art my God" (Ps. 16:2), "the God of my heart" (Ps. 73:26), the God of my soul, the God of my spirit. As such I acknowledge Thee, and as such I adore Thee now and forever. Live, O Jesus!

# 65

## A Place of Refuge

*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Book II, Chap. 12  
Translated by J. K. RYAN

"A Place of Refuge" develops the theme, dear to all mystics, of the need to "flee the world" and seek refuge near the Lord. Now this does not mean run-

ning away into the wilderness. One can be alone with the Lord even while being outwardly engaged in business or association with others. A new note is struck here, unfamiliar although not absolutely alien to medieval spirituality.

**B**IRDS have their nests in trees, to which they may retire when they have need, and the deer have bushes and thickets in which they conceal themselves and enjoy the cool shade in the heat of summer. So should our hearts, Philothea, choose some place every day, either on Mount Calvary or in the wounds of our Lord or in some other place near Him, as a retreat to which they may occasionally retire to refresh and recreate themselves amidst their exterior occupations, and there, as in a stronghold, defend themselves against temptation. Blessed is the soul that can say with truth to the Lord: "Thou art my place of strength and my refuge, my defence from storms, and my shadow from the heat" (Ps. 31:3; Eccli. 34:19).

Remember then, Philothea, to retire occasionally into the solitude of your heart while you are outwardly engaged in business or association with others. This mental solitude cannot be prevented by the multitude of those who surround you. As they are not about your heart, but only about your body, your heart may remain in the presence of God alone. This was the exercise which King David practiced amidst his various occupations. To this he himself testifies a thousand times in his Psalms, as when he says: "O Lord, I am always with Thee" (Ps. 73:23). "I set the Lord always before me in my sight" (Ps. 16:8). "To Thee I have lifted up my eyes," O my God, "who dwellest in heaven" (Ps. 123:1). "My eyes are ever toward the Lord" (Ps. 25:15). Indeed our occupations are seldom so serious as to prevent us from withdrawing our heart occasionally from them, in order to retire into this divine solitude.

## On Being Diligent Without Solicitude

*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Book III, Chap. 10  
Translated by J. K. RYAN

This selection might well be entitled "On Being Concerned, Yet Not Worried": a principle of spirituality dear to the Quakers. To achieve this, a person needs not so much to *believe* in Providence, but rather to *become aware* of it—inasmuch as God has set before each person a particular task to do, and will give him the means to achieve it.

THE CARE and diligence with which we should attend to our concerns are things very different from solicitude, worry, and anxiety. The angels have care for our salvation and procure it with diligence, yet they do not have solicitude, worry, and anxiety. Care and diligence naturally result from their charity, whereas solicitude and anxiety are utterly incompatible with their felicity. Care and diligence may be accompanied by tranquillity and peace of mind, but not by solicitude and worry, much less anxiety. Be careful and attentive, my Philothea, to all those affairs which God has committed to your care. Since God has confided them to you, He wishes that you have great care over them. If possible, do not have solicitude and worry, that is, do not exert yourself over them with uneasiness, anxiety, and forwardness. Do not be worried about them, for all worry disturbs reason and judgment, and prevents us from doing well the very things about which we are worried.

When our Lord reprimanded Martha, He said: "Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous, and art troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). Observe that she would not have been troubled had she been merely diligent. Being overconcerned

and disquieted, she hurried and troubled herself. It was for this that our Lord reproved her. . . .

In all your affairs rely wholly on God's Providence, through which alone you must look for success. Nevertheless, labor quietly on your part to co-operate with its designs. You may be assured that if you trust well in God the success that comes to you shall be always that which is the most profitable for you, whether it appear good or bad according to your own private judgment. . . .

Above all things, take heed that you never leave God's hand and protection. For should He forsake you, you will not be able to go a step further without falling to the ground. My meaning is, Philothea, that amidst those ordinary affairs and occupations which do not require so sharp and earnest an attention, you should look more on God than on them. When they are of such importance as to require your whole attention for doing them well, then also you should look from time to time toward God, like mariners who, to arrive at the port to which they are bound, look more up toward heaven than down on the sea on which they sail. Thus will God work with you, in you, and for you, and your labor shall be followed with consolation.

Blaise Pascal  
1623-1622

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## The "Memorial"

From EMILE CAILLIET's translation of  
*The Great Shorter Works of Pascal*

Pascal wrote the "Memorial" on a piece of parchment, which was then sewed into the lining of his coat. Mark the following: the recitation of the Martyrologium (i.e., the Catholic catalogue of Saints for each day of the year) means that Pascal's experience took place not in isolation but within the "communion of saints." The "fire" is the fire of the burning bush (Ex. 3:2); Christianity, as Pascal understands it, is not just another ideology but the substance of Biblical Revelation. "Total submission to . . . *my director*" is somehow an anticlimax; for in *Pensées*, No. 554, Pascal wrote: "I (Christ) speak to thee, and often counsel thee, because thy director cannot speak to thee, for I do not want thee to lack a guide. And perhaps I do so at his prayers, and thus he leads thee without thy seeing it. Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou did not possess me."

IN THE YEAR of grace, 1654,  
On Monday, 23d of November, Feast of St. Clement,  
Pope and Martyr, and of others in the Martyrology,  
Vigil of Saint Chrysogonus, Martyr, and others,  
From about half past ten in the evening until about half  
past twelve.

## Fire

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars.

Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.

God of Jesus Christ,

“My God and thy God” (John 20:17).

“Thy God shall be my God” (Ruth 1:16).

Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except God.

He is to be found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Greatness of the human soul.

“Righteous Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee” (John 17:25).

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

I have separated myself from Him.

“They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters” (Jer. 2:13).

My God, wilt Thou leave me? (cf. Matt. 27:46)

Let me not be separated from Him eternally.

“This is the eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and the one whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).

Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

I have separated myself from Him, denied Him, crucified Him.

Let me never be separated from Him.

We keep hold of Him only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Renunciation, total and sweet.

Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.

Eternally in joy for a day’s training on earth.

“I will not forget Thy words” (Ps. 119:16). Amen.

## The Mystery of Jesus

*Pensées*

Translated by W. F. TROTTER

This is a meditation on the Passion which Pascal wrote shortly after his arrival at Port Royal and before his *Short Life of Christ*.

**J**ESUS suffers in His passion the torments which men inflict upon Him; but in His agony He suffers the torments which He inflicts on Himself; “troubling Himself” (John 11:33; cf. Mark 14:33). This is a suffering from no human, for He must be almighty to bear it.

Jesus seeks some comfort at least in His three dearest friends, and they are asleep. He prays them to bear with Him for a little, and they leave Him with entire indifference, having so little compassion that it could not prevent their sleeping even for a moment. And thus Jesus was left alone to the wrath of God.

Jesus is alone on the earth, without any one not only to feel and share His suffering, but even to know of it; He and Heaven were alone in that knowledge.

Jesus is in a garden, not of delight as the first Adam, where he lost himself and the whole human race, but in one of agony, where He saved Himself and the whole human race.

He suffers this affliction and this desertion in the horror of night.

I believe that Jesus never complained but on this single occasion; but then He complained as if He could no longer bear his extreme suffering. “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death” (Mark 14:34).

Jesus seeks companionship and comfort from men. This is the sole occasion in all His life, as it seems to me. But He receives it not, for His disciples are asleep.

Jesus will be in agony even to the end of the world. We must not sleep during that time.

Jesus, in the midst of this universal desertion, including that of His own friends chosen to watch with Him, finding them asleep, is vexed because of the danger to which they expose, not Him, but themselves; He cautions them for their own safety and their own good, with a sincere tenderness for them during their ingratitude, and warns them that the spirit is willing and the flesh weak.

Jesus, finding them asleep, without being restrained by any consideration for themselves or for Him, has the kindness not to waken them, and leaves them in repose.

Jesus prays, uncertain of the will of his Father, and fears death; but, when He knows it, He goes forward to offer Himself to death. "Let us be going" (Matt. 26:46). "He went forth" (John 18:4).

Jesus asked of men and was not heard.

Jesus, while His disciples slept, wrought their salvation. He has wrought that of each of the righteous while they slept, both in their nothingness before their birth, and in their sins after their birth.

He prays only once that the cup pass away, and then with submission; and twice that it come if necessary.

Jesus is weary.

Jesus, seeing all His friends asleep and all His enemies wakeful, commits Himself entirely to His Father.

Jesus does not regard in Judas his enmity, but the order of God, which He loves and admits, since He calls him friend.

Jesus tears Himself away from His disciples to enter into His agony; we must tear ourselves away from our nearest and dearest to imitate Him.

Jesus being in agony and in the greatest affliction, let us pray longer.

We implore the mercy of God, not that He may leave us at peace in our vices, but that He may deliver us from them.

If God gave us masters by His own hand, oh! how necessary for us to obey them with a good heart! Necessity and events follow infallibly.

—“Console thyself, thou wouldest not seek Me, if thou hadst not found Me.

“I thought of thee in Mine agony, I have sweated such drops of blood for thee.

“It is tempting Me rather than proving thyself, to think if thou wouldest do such and such a thing on an occasion which has not happened; I shall act in thee if it occur.

“Let thyself be guided by my rules; see how well I have led the Virgin and the saints who have let Me act in them.

“The Father loves all that I do.

“Dost thou wish that it always cost Me the blood of my humanity, without thy shedding tears?

“Thy conversion is my affair; fear not, and pray with confidence as for Me.

“I am present with thee by my word in Scripture, by my Spirit in the Church and by inspiration, by my power in the priests, by my prayer in the faithful.

“Physicians will not heal thee, for thou wilt die at last. But it is I who heal thee, and make the body immortal.

“Suffer bodily chains and servitude, I deliver thee at present only from spiritual servitude.

“I am more a friend to thee than such and such an one, for I have done for thee more than they; they would not have suffered what I have suffered from thee, and they would not have died for thee as I have done in the time of thine infidelities and cruelties, and as I am ready to do, and do, among my elect and at the Holy Sacrament.

“If thou knewest thy sins, thou wouldest lose heart.”

—I shall lose it then, Lord, for on Thy assurance I believe their malice.

—“No, for I, by whom thou learnest, can heal thee of them, and what I say to thee is a sign that I will heal thee. In proportion to thy expiation of them, thou wilt know them, and it will be said to thee: ‘Behold, thy sins are forgiven thee.’ Repent, then, for thy hidden sins, and for the secret malice of those which thou knowest.”

—Lord, I give Thee all.

**Brother Lawrence**  
*ca. 1605-1691***69****In a Monastery Kitchen****From an account by Monsieur de Beaufort  
Translated by SISTER MARY DAVID**

This selection, as recorded by Monsieur de Beaufort, gives the solution to the perpetual antinomy between action and prayer. Now prayer need not be discontinued, since the soul continues inwardly in God's presence, even amidst the turmoils of action.

**T**HE TIME of action does not differ at all from that of prayer; I possess God as tranquilly in the bustle of my kitchen, where sometimes several people are asking me different things at one time, as if I were on my knees before the Blessed Sacrament. My faith sometimes even becomes so enlightened that I think I have lost it; it seems to me that the curtain of obscurity is drawn, that the endless, cloudless day of the other life is beginning to dawn.

In the way of God, thoughts count for little, love does everything. And it is not necessary to have great things to do. I turn my little omelette in the pan for the love of God; when it is finished, if I have nothing to do, I prostrate myself on the ground and adore my God who gave me the grace to make it, after which I arise, more content than a king. When I cannot do anything else, it is enough for me to have lifted a straw from the earth for the love of God.

People seek for methods of learning to love God. They hope to arrive at it by I know not how many different practices; they take much trouble to remain in the presence of God in a quantity of ways. Is it not much shorter and more direct to do everything for the love of God, to make use of all the labors of one's state in life to show Him that, and to maintain His presence within us by this communion of our hearts with His? There is no finesse about it, one has only to do it generously and simply.

## 70

## A Way of Life: In God's Presence

From a letter to a Superior  
Translated by SISTER MARY DAVID

Here is a spiritual account written by Brother Lawrence at the request of one of his superiors. He says that God is always nigh, and that this presence fills him with a joy which at times verges on the delirious. He tells of his amazing realization that his sins do not turn God away. Brother Lawrence says: God does not even speak of "pardoning me, not taking away my former habits." Such a statement was grist for the mills of quietism. Yet, on the lips of the good brother, it meant probably nothing more than a recognition of the fact that God receives us "just as we are," and that there is no use in lingering disconsolately on the recollection of our sins—in which there may be a subtle form of pride.

**R**EVEREND FATHER: Not finding my way of life in books, although I am not at all worried about it, still for greater assurance I would like very much to know your opinion on the state in which I find myself.

A few days ago, in a private discussion with a person of devotion, she told me that the spiritual life is a life of grace which begins with servile fear, grows through the hope of eternal life, and is consummated with pure love; also, that different people have different degrees of achieving at last this blessed consummation.

I have not followed all these methods. On the contrary. I do not know why, but they scared me at first; this was the reason that, at my entrance into religion, I resolved to give myself entirely to God in satisfaction for my sins, and for love of Him to renounce all that was not He.

During the first years, I used to occupy myself in my ordinary prayers with thoughts of death, judgment, hell, heaven, and my sins. I continued in this way for several years, busying myself carefully for the rest of the day and even during my work with the presence of God, whom I considered to be always near me, often even in the depth of my heart. This gave me so high an esteem for God that faith alone was capable of satisfying me on this point.

Insensibly I did the same thing during my prayers, which caused me great sweetness and consolation. This is how I began. I shall tell you, however, that during the first ten years I suffered very much; the fear that I had of not belonging to God as I would have wished, my past sins always present before my eyes, and the great graces that God gave me, were the matter and the source of all my ills. During this whole time I used to fall often, and to get up immediately. It seemed to me that creatures, reason, and even God were against me and that faith alone was on my side. I was sometimes troubled with the thought that this was an effect of my presumption in aspiring to be all of a sudden at a point which others reach only with difficulty; at other times, that I was willfully destroying myself, that there was no salvation for me.

When I was not expecting anything more than to end my days in this trouble and anxiety (which did not at all lessen my confidence in God and served only to increase my faith), suddenly I found myself wholly changed. My soul, which until

then was always troubled, felt a profound interior peace, as if it were in its center and a place of repose. . . .

I have given up all my private devotions and prayers which are not of obligation, and occupy myself only with holding myself ever in His holy presence. This I do by a simple attention and a general, loving gaze upon God, which I might call actual presence of God, or, better, a mute and secret intercourse of the soul with God, which scarcely ceases. I experience such contentment and joy, interior and even exterior, that in order to moderate it and prevent its becoming apparent, I am forced to do childish things that savor more of folly than devotion.

To sum up, Reverend Father, I cannot doubt that my soul has been with God for more than thirty years. I will pass over many things for fear of tiring you, but I believe I should indicate to you in what manner I consider myself before God, whom I envisage as my king.

I regard myself as the most miserable of men, torn with wounds, filled with stenches, who has committed all sorts of crimes against his king; feeling a sensible remorse, I confess to Him all my evil deeds, I beg pardon for them, I abandon myself into His hands, to do with me what He pleases. This king, full of goodness and mercy, far from chastising me, embraces me lovingly, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the keys of His treasury, and treats me in every way as His favorite. He converses with me and enjoys my company ceaselessly in a thousand manners, without speaking of pardoning me nor taking away my former habits. Although I beg Him to do with me as He wills, I find myself always weaker and more miserable, but more caressed by God. That is how I look upon myself from time to time in His holy presence. . . .

As to my hours of prayer, they are no more than a continuation of this same exercise. Sometimes, during them, I consider myself a piece of stone before a sculptor who intends to make a statue out of it. Presenting myself thus before God, I beg Him

to form in my soul His perfect image and to render me wholly like to Him.

At other times, as soon as I recollect myself, I feel my whole mind and heart rise without care or effort and remain suspended, fixed in God as if in its center and place of repose.

I know that some people consider this state as laziness, deception, and self-love. . . . If this is deception in me, then God must remedy it. Let Him do with me what He pleases, for I wish nothing but Him and to be all His. Still, you will do me a great favor to send me your opinion, to which I always defer, because I have a particular esteem for your Reverence.

Fénelon  
1651-1715

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## Pure Love and the Desire for Salvation

*Avis et Instructions*, Chap. 19  
Translated by M. W. STILLMAN

This is a sober doctrinal statement, perhaps too sober to please Madame Guyon very much. It justifies the Christian's disinterested love of God by contrasting it with the gross desire of moderately repentant sinners for salvation as a personal convenience. However, to state that God intends man's salvation as a "lesser aim" than His glory is somehow to overlook that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16), and that it belongs to His glory to secure the victory of this love.

**G**OD has made all things for Himself. He owes to Himself all that He makes, and in this He can never yield His rights. The intelligent and free creature is no less His than the creature without intelligence and without liberty. He brings back to Himself necessarily and wholly everything which is in the creature without intelligence, and He wishes the intelligent creature to offer itself entirely and without reserve to Him alone. It is true that He wishes our happiness, but our happiness is neither the true aim of His work, nor an aim equal to that of His glory. It is indeed for His glory that He wishes our happiness. Our happiness is only a lesser aim, which

He connects with the last and essential aim, which is His glory. He Himself is His chief and only end in all things.

To reach this main aim of our creation, we must prefer God to ourselves, and only wish for our salvation for the sake of His glory. Otherwise, we should reverse His order. It is not our own interest in our blessedness which should make us desire His glory. It is on the contrary, the desire for His glory which should make us desire our blessedness, as one of the things which He is pleased to make part of His glory. . . .

The reason that men have such a reluctance to understand this truth, and that this word is so hard for them, is that they love themselves and want to love themselves for their own interest. They understand in general and superficially that we must love God more than self, and only to love self for His sake. They speak these great words easily, because they do so without understanding their whole force. But they shudder when anyone explains to them that we must prefer God and His glory to ourselves and our beatitude, and truly associate one with the other, as the lesser end to the main end.

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### The Way of Pure Love

*Avis et Instructions*, Chap. 21  
Translated by M. W. STILLMAN

In this passage we are shown the strength as well as the weakness of quietism. While the way of "pure love" is perfect and desirable, Fénelon would not have us blame persons who do not rise above the level of mixed motives. Fénelon is charitable, but his charity is somewhat spoiled by his condescension. The truth of the matter is that quietism as such tends

to build up a two-story religion: the ground floor for the rabble, and the upstairs for those who know better. This had been the error of gnosticism; and it still is, in a sense, the error of modern attempts at "demythologizing" Christianity while keeping "symbols" for children and simpletons. It is emphatically not the Gospel.

**W**HY would we prefer to see the gifts of God in ourselves rather than in others, if this is not attachment to self? Whoever prefers to see them in himself than in others, will also feel badly to see them more perfectly in others than in himself. Hence comes jealousy. Then what must we do? We must rejoice that God has performed His will in us, and that He reigns within us, not for our happiness, nor for our perfection because it is ours, but for God's good pleasure and for His pure glory.

Notice two things about this. One, that all this is not a fantastic subtlety, because God, who wants to strip the soul to perfect it, and will pursue it relentlessly toward a purer love, makes it really pass these tests of itself, and does not let it rest until it has taken away all reversion and all self-support from its love. Nothing is so jealous, so severe and so sensitive than this principle of pure love. It would not endure a thousand things which are imperceptible to us in an ordinary state. And what ordinary pious people call subtlety appears an essential thing to the soul which God wants to detach from itself. It is like the gold which is purified in the crucible. The fire consumes all that is not pure gold. We must also make crucibles of our entire hearts, to purify the divine love.

The second thing to notice is that God does not thus pursue every soul in this life. There are an infinite number of very religious people whom He leaves in some self-interest. Indeed these reversions sustain them in the practice of virtue, and serve to purify them up to a certain point. Nothing would be more unwise nor more dangerous than to take from them this comforting preoccupation with the blessings of God in rela-

tion to their own perfection. The first persons have a disinterested gratitude. They render glory to God for what He does for us for His pure glory. The last persons also consider what He has done for them, and unite their interest to that of God.

If the first wanted to take this mixture and this support of self-interest in relation to their blessings, away from the others, they would do as much harm as if they should wean a baby who cannot yet eat. To take the breast away from him, would be to make him die. We should never want to take from a soul what still nourishes it, and what God allows it to sustain its weakness. To want to anticipate grace is to destroy it. Also the second kind of persons must not condemn the others, although they are not concerned with their own perfection in the blessings which they receive. God does what He pleases in each one.

## 73

## Pure Love and Suffering

*Avis et Instructions, Chap. 37*

Translated by M. W. STILLMAN

This selection is a delicate analysis of the Christian attitude in the presence of adversity and suffering. Fénelon says resignation is not enough, for "there is in it something which suffers from having to suffer, and which resists." Such resistance may not be overcome except through the exercise of pure love or—to forsake the language of quietism—of a loving conformity to God's will.

**W**E KNOW that we must suffer, and that we deserve it. However, we are always surprised at the suffering as though we believed that we neither deserved it nor needed it. It is only a true and pure love which loves to suffer, because it

is only a true and pure love which abandons itself. Resignation makes suffering, but there is in it something which suffers from having to suffer, and which resists. Resignation which gives nothing to God except with limits and with self-concern, would like to suffer, but it often examines itself fearing to suffer harm. To be more exact, we are two people in resignation. One controls the other, and watches over it to prevent it from revolting. In pure love, which is completely detached and abandoned, the soul frees itself in silence on the cross and in its union with Jesus crucified, without any reversion to its own suffering. It is only a single, simple will, which can see God as He is, without dreaming of seeing itself. It says nothing. It notices nothing.

What does it do? It suffers. Is that all? Yes, that is all. It has only to suffer. Thus love makes itself enough understood without speech or thought. It does the only thing which it has to do, which is to want nothing when it lacks all consolation. A will satisfied by that of God, when all else is taken away from it, is the purest of all loves.

What a relief to think that we do not have to try so hard to urge ourselves constantly to patience, and to be always careful and strained, so that we can sustain the character of a virtue won on the outside! It is enough to be little and given up to suffering. This is not courage. It is something less and more; less in the eyes of good men in general, more in the eyes of pure faith. It is a littleness in self, which places the soul in all the greatness of God. It is a weakness which detaches from all force, and which gives the whole power of God. "When I am weak," says St. Paul, "it is then that I am strong. I can do all in Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

## From the Renaissance Onward: England

THE peculiar character of the Reformation of the Church in the British Isles was bound to condition even the intimate manifestations of spiritual life. The period as a whole was dominated by the rise and development of Anglicanism, which is to a large extent a political phenomenon—the substitution of the Church of the King or of the nation for the Church of the Pope. This is not to say that there were no “Evangelicals,” but it is clear that the political factors outweighed the religious in the renovation of the Church. As for doctrinal Calvinism in the English Church, it may be regarded as an importation, the late product of continental theologians; it resembles little the groping of the French Reformer and his companions for a satisfactory expression of their religious thought and experience.

Such a climate was not very favorable to life-transforming experiences. It is well-known that established and majority Churches of every description often resign themselves to obtaining from the masses an acceptable average of conformity, of zeal and of morality, which in itself is no mean achievement, human nature being what it is. But this is emphatically not the Gospel, which calls for conviction, heroism and total dedication—a quite different matter indeed.

Thus, we are led to look among the dissenters for Christians of arresting stature, for something more than able theologians

or ecclesiastical worthies. Of course, dissenting does not make a man a Christian; but it is a historical fact that among men who refused to equate Christianity with the Established Church, or who denounced the latter's worldly ties and compromises, some grew to be numbered among the most inspired heralds and the most truthful witnesses of Christ in all times.

George Fox, the prophet of the Quakers, is one of these—we prefer not to call him the founder of the Society of Friends, a title which already connotes some formal denominationalism. He was born at Fenny-Drayton, Leicestershire, in 1624, into an honest, hard-working family. The father was a weaver. He sent his son as an apprentice to a shoemaker. The adolescent, who had been impressed at home with the earnestness and sincerity of the religion of his parents, was shocked by the coarseness of his companions—all the more when they were churchgoers. Conversations with "priests," and contact with the official religion of the "steeple houses" did little to enlighten him and to relieve his anxiety. But the wonders of the spiritual world were gradually "opened" to him in the course of his solitary wanderings on the moors, where he was given to realize the true demands of the Gospel. Urged by an irrepressible instinct, he began to preach in 1648, not in churches—for he was generally barred from them—but in the fields, in the market places, in taverns and private houses, always in the face of violent opposition. He was repeatedly locked up in local jails, or run out of town by mobs, or duly judged and sentenced to longer prison terms. Although he had no intention of founding a sect, the "Friends" began spontaneously to gather, and the rules which he gave them were all experience-tested. He married at the age of forty-five and two years later, in 1671, sailed from Gravesend to visit groups of Friends in America and later in Holland. He died in London in 1691.

The message of George Fox reaches us through his *Journal*, from which our selections are taken, and through miscellaneous letters and addresses. It is based essentially on his personal experience, as he was listening to the "inner voice," or

looking at the world in the radiance of the "inner light." For he knew that God is not speaking to us from a distance, or from the remote past. God speaks always to men, but men must harken unto Him, and they may not hear His voice if they do not observe the discipline of silence. As Rufus Jones puts it, religion is not "words, words, words, but real experience of God," as the only possible source of godly activities. It is obvious that the doctrine of George Fox draws heavily on the theology of the fourth Gospel, in contrast with the official dogmatics of his time, with their one-sided interpretation of Paul's theology of salvation artificially severed from its context.

John Bunyan, another irregular, left after him not a religious family, but a book which has become a classic of Protestant devotional literature, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He was born at Harrowden, Bedfordshire, in 1628, had little or no schooling, learned from his father the trade of tinker, soldiered in the parliamentary army, married first in 1649 and a second time in 1659 after having been a widower for six years. He was received in the Baptist church of Bedford in 1653, and soon afterward he began to preach without a license, for which he was granted the king's hospitality in the Bedford jail from 1660 to 1672. After his release, he was called to the pastorate of the Bedford Baptist church, but had to serve six more months in jail in 1675 for breaking the laws on preaching. He died in 1688 during a journey to London.

His first writing is an account of his early religious experience, which he wrote in the Bedford jail, and published under the title *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, during a temporary release from prison for a few weeks in 1666. Though it is prolix and repetitious, it helps us to understand Bunyan's inner conflict, his moments of utter despair, his anguished search for some "scripture" which would afford him solace, his elation when one was found, only to have the same cycle begin over and over again. It is very different from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, an allegory of the life journey of a

Christian, the two parts of which appeared respectively in 1678 and 1684 and were combined later in one volume. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is more impersonal, less subjective than *Grace Abounding*; it gives us reason to suppose that Bunyan had at last reached a much needed emotional and spiritual stability. His testimony supposes in both cases a doctrinal background which can be labeled as distinctively "Protestant." The stress is on justification by faith, the assurance of salvation (Bunyan had read Luther's commentary on Galatians in the English translation of 1575), and the infallible authority of Scripture as it conveys God's promise to men.

Professional soldiers dislike irregulars, especially when the irregulars prove to be right. The parsons of the Established Church could well feel that their comfortable routine was threatened by such explosive characters as Fox or Bunyan but they could not possibly raise any valid objection against a man like William Law, who happened to be a paragon of ecclesiastical propriety. He was born in 1686 at King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire, where his father was a grocer. We know little about his childhood and adolescence. A sizar at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, since 1705, he was elected fellow in 1711 and received holy orders. Before him was the existence of the ideal college don of his days: celibate, pious, studious—meticulous in ordering his life, his readings and his devotions. Being opposed in theory to political changes, he still regarded the dethroned Stuart kings as the only legitimate rulers of England. He felt unable to take the oath of allegiance on the accession of George I of Hanover, and this spelled ecclesiastical death and meant resigning his fellowship. We do not know what he did immediately on leaving Emmanuel College. In 1723 he entered the house of Mr. Gibbon at Putney, as the tutor of his son Edward (the historian's father). After Mr. Gibbon died in 1737, Law left Putney and retired in 1740 to King's Cliffe, where he was joined in short order by a widow, Mrs. Hutchinson, and a spinster, Miss Esther Gibbon. The two women cared for him, worshiped him, and ran the school for poor children

which they founded jointly. There he spent the rest of his days, stern, composed and dignified, writing schedules for the pupils and working painstakingly on treatises of spirituality, till he died in 1761.

Law may have been a saint, but he was a joyless one. We cannot imagine him cutting capers with the children at King's Cliffe—some saints did such things. His one idea was that a Christian—every Christian—is under obligation to live a consecrated life, no matter what his station or particular calling. Law never thought, to put it in the words of one of his contraditors, that it was possible "to be righteous overmuch." He loathed the loose living of many in his age, and their superficial religion, when they had any. (James Boswell recorded with one sweep of the pen his edification at hearing of an eloquent and fashionable preacher and his affairs with London prostitutes.) The early books of William Law, such as *A Practical Treatise of Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call to Devout and Holy Life*, written respectively in 1726 and 1729, reflect his assiduous and eclectic reading of François de Sales and the great French spiritual authors of the seventeenth century. Later on, presumably toward the end of his stay with the Gibbons, he discovered the mystical writings of Jacob Boehme and built up his statements and metaphors into a system of theology—at times questionable, but having the merit of challenging the shallowness of English Protestant scholasticism on the eve of the Enlightenment.

John Wesley, the initiator of Methodism, was born at Epworth, Lincolnshire, in 1703, the fifteenth child of the Oxford-educated rector of the parish. An impressionable child, he was sent at the age of ten to the right kind of school, the "Charterhouse" in London. He entered Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1720, became a fellow of Lincoln College in 1726; and, after two years' service as deacon in the paternal rectory, he returned to Oxford. Systematic in his life and devotions, austere and abstemious—he had been much influenced by Law and Law's earlier writings—he became active in propa-

gating his own version of Christian piety (sincere and somewhat bookish) among the members of a private circle who came to be known as the "holy club." He volunteered in 1735 as a chaplain to the colony of Georgia, where he achieved little success. He was back in England in 1738, and it was then that he lived through a deeply personal religious experience which brought a change in his spiritual orientations. The "joy of his salvation" was restored in him, and it absorbed his painstaking efforts to achieve a devout life. Wesley's renewed understanding of Christianity was due partly to the influence of German Moravians, whom he met in England and in the course of a journey to the continent.

Wesley felt that dominion over sin was the index of the true faith, and that the perfection which is demanded of man (Matt. 5:48), is the perfection of love. The actions of a Christian must proceed out of his love for God, self and neighbor; and love, in spite of human errors and weaknesses, is able *actually* to conquer sin and to become man's supreme driving force and the unique source of his manifold activities. These activities are never the activities of an isolated individual. Wesley has no use for a monk's dialogue with God—which develops at times into a monologue—within the four walls of his cell. In fact, he parted company with Law on this account and repudiated the growing quietism of his former friends the Moravians. For him action and the social character of Christianity are essential. A Christian who refuses to toil in the open field, or to testify in word and deed, is no Christian at all.

The spiritual doctrine of Wesley, born out of experience, but framed in a system of theology akin to that of the Arminians, could not but clash with the unmitigated Calvinism of official Church theologians; for these, man's total depravity was a dogma, and his ability to achieve anything resembling actual righteousness was out of the question, even after he had been justified. Moreover, the organization of Methodist "cells" and societies within the Established Church was naturally distasteful to the hierarchy. For these reasons, Wesley was led to drift away from the Church of England as early as 1739,

and he devoted the rest of his life to preaching and organizing Methodism as an independent Christian body. He died in London in 1791.

Wesley's spiritual doctrine is found in treatises, such as *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, written in 1766, and in his *Journals*, which are a continuous record of his life and which were published from 1738 until his death. I have chosen three passages from *A Plain Account . . .* for their practical value as pieces of advice originating in experience, and relatively free from theological speculation.

**George Fox**  
1624-1691

**74**

## A Temple Not Made by Hands

*The Journal (Year 1647)*

This is Fox's own account of how he was given to realize that God's people were His temple, that He dwelt in them and could be heard of them more clearly than in the church where "Priest Stephens," a worthy Oxford graduate, was dispensing official theology from the pulpit.

IT WAS opened in me that God, who made the world, did not dwell in temples made with hands. This, at the first, seemed a strange word because both priests and people use to call their temples or churches, dreadful places, and holy ground, and the temples of God. But the Lord showed me, so that I did see clearly, that He did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up, but in people's hearts; for both Stephen and the Apostle Paul bore testimony that He did not dwell in temples made with hands, not even in that which He had once commanded to be built, since he put an end to it; but that His people were His temple, and He dwelt in them. This opened in me as I walked in the fields to my relations' house. And when I came there, they told me that Nathaniel Stephens the priest had been there, and told them he was afraid of me for going after new lights. And I smiled to

myself, knowing what the Lord had opened in me concerning him and his brethren, but I told not my relations, who, though they saw beyond the priests, yet they went to hear them, and were grieved because I would not go also. But I brought them Scriptures, and told them there was an anointing within man to teach him, and that the Lord would teach His people Himself.

## 75

## A Spirit of Discernment

*The Journal* (Year 1647)

This selection also is taken from the *Journal* for 1647. Fox describes how in an hour of doubt and trouble the Light began to shine—revealing whatever had any part with “darkness, death, temptation, and unrighteous, the ungodly”—and how God’s refining fire enabled him to detect, and eventually consumed, that which was not genuine or of good alloy.

ONE DAY when I had been walking solitarily abroad and was come home, I was taken up in the love of God, so that I could not but admire the greatness of His love. And while I was in that condition it was opened unto me by the eternal Light and power, and I therein saw clearly that all was done and to be done in and by Christ, and how He conquers and destroys this tempter, the Devil and all his works, and is atop of him, and that all these troubles were good for me, and temptations for the trial of my faith which Christ had given me. And the Lord opened me that I saw through all these troubles and temptations. My living faith was raised, that I saw all was done by Christ, the life, and my belief was in Him. And when at any time my condition was veiled, my secret belief was

stayed firm, and hope underneath held me, as an anchor in the bottom of the sea, the world where all the raging waves, foul weather, tempests, and temptations are. But oh, then did I see my troubles, trials, and temptations more than ever I had done! As the Light appeared, all appeared that is out of the Light, darkness, death, temptations, the unrighteous, the ungodly; all was manifest and seen in the Light.

Then after this did a pure fire appear in me; then I saw how He sat as a refiner's fire and as the fuller's soap; and then the spiritual discerning came into me, by which I did discern my own thoughts, groans and sighs, and what it was that did veil me, and what it was that did open me. And that which could not abide in the patience nor endure the fire, in the Light I found to be the groans of the flesh (that could not give up to the will of God), which had veiled me, and that could not be patient in all trials, troubles and anguishes and perplexities, and could not give up self to die by the Cross, the power of God, that the living and quickened might follow Him; and that that which would cloud and veil from the presence of Christ, that which the sword of the Spirit cuts down and which must die, might not be kept alive. And I discerned the groans of the Spirit, which did open me, and made intercession to God, in which Spirit is the true waiting upon God for the redemption of the body and of the whole creation. And by this true Spirit, in which the true sighing is, I saw over the false sighings and groanings. And by this invisible Spirit I discerned all the false hearing and the false seeing, and the false smelling which was atop, above the Spirit, quenching and grieving it; and that all they that were there were in confusion and deceit, where the false asking and praying is, in deceit, and atop in that nature and tongue that takes God's holy name in vain, and wallows in the Egyptian sea, and asketh but hath not. For they hate His light and resist the Holy Ghost, and turn the grace into wantonness, and rebel against the Spirit, and are erred from the faith they should ask in, and from the Spirit they should pray by. He that knoweth these things in the true Spirit, can witness them. The divine light of Christ mani-

festeth all things; and the spiritual fire trieth all things, and severeth all things. Several things did I then see as the Lord opened them to me, for he showed me that which can live in His holy refining fire, and that can live to God under His law.

## 76

## The Calling of the Prophet

*The Journal (Year 1648)*

Fox tells how he was seized with a vehement concern for the true welfare of his fellow men, and how he was called of God to minister to all of them—"that they might know the pure religion" as defined in the terms of James 1:27, in contrast with the empty formalism so common in the official church.

**O**N A certain time, as I was walking in the fields, the Lord said unto me, "Thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, which was before the foundation of the world"; and as the Lord spoke it I believed, and saw it in the new birth. Then, some time after, the Lord commanded me to go abroad into the world, which was like a briery, thorny wilderness, and when I came in the Lord's mighty power with the word of life into the world, the world swelled and made a noise like the great raging waves of the sea. Priests and professors, magistrates and people, were all like a sea, when I came to proclaim the day of the Lord amongst them and to preach repentance to them.

Now I was sent to turn people from darkness to the light that they might receive Christ Jesus, for to as many as should receive Him in His light, I saw that He would give power to become the sons of God, which I had obtained by receiving Christ. And as I was to direct people to the Spirit that gave

forth the Scriptures, by which they might be led into all Truth, and so up to Christ and God, as they had been who gave them forth. And I was to turn them to the grace of God, and to the truth in the heart, which came by Jesus, that by this grace they might be taught, which would bring them into salvation, that their hearts might be established by it, and their words might be seasoned, and all might come to know their salvation nigh. . . . I saw that the grace of God, which brings salvation, had appeared to all men, and that the manifestation of the Spirit of God was given to every man to profit withal. These things I did not see by the help of man, nor by the letter, though they are written in the letter, but I saw them in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His immediate Spirit and power, as did the holy men of God, by whom the holy Scriptures were written. Yet I had no slight esteem of the Holy Scriptures, but they were very precious to me, for I was in that Spirit by which they were given forth, and what the Lord opened in me I afterwards found was agreeable to them. I could speak much of these things and many volumes might be written, but all would prove too short to set forth the infinite love, wisdom, and power of God, in preparing, fitting, and furnishing me for the service He had appointed me to; letting me see the depths of Satan on the one hand, and opening to me, on the other hand, the divine mysteries of His own everlasting kingdom.

Now, when the Lord God and His son, Jesus Christ, did send me forth into the world, to preach His everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation, and their way to God; even that divine Spirit which would lead them into all Truth and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any. But with and by this divine power and Spirit of God, and the light of Jesus, I was to bring people off from all their own ways to Christ, the new and living way. . . .

And I was to bring people off from all the world's religions, which are vain, that they might know the pure religion, and

might visit the fatherless, the widows and the strangers, and keep themselves from the spots of the world. And then there would not be so many beggars, the sight of whom often grieved my heart, to see so much heart-hartedness amongst them that professed the name of Christ. And I was to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings, and singings, which stood in forms without power, that their fellowships might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the eternal Spirit of God; that they might pray in the Holy Ghost, and sing in the spirit and with the grace that comes by Jesus, making melody in their hearts to the Lord who hath sent His beloved Son to be their Savior, and caused His heavenly sun to shine upon all the world, and through them all, and His heavenly rain to fall upon the just and the unjust (as His outward rain doth fall, and His outward sun doth shine on all), which is God's unspeakable love to the world.

John Bunyan  
1628-1688

77

Love Discovered  
*Grace Abounding*, par. 89-93

This passage from *Grace Abounding* is an account of how God's love was revealed to Bunyan through the instrumentality of a sermon on Cant. 4:1: "Behold, thou art fair, *my love.*" The last two words of the text struck home, and Bunyan did not even hear the rest of the discourse. His joy at the thought that God loved him, and told him so, remained with him for a few days until he fell back into his despondency.

**I**N THIS condition (of despair) I went a great while; but when the comforting time was come, I heard one preach a sermon on these words in the Song: "Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair" (Cant. 4:1). But at that time he made these two words, "my love," his chief and subject matter.... I got nothing by what he said at present; only . . . as I was going home, these words came again into my thoughts; and I well remember, as they came in, I said thus in my heart:

What shall I get by thinking on these two words? This thought had no sooner passed through my heart, but these words began thus to kindle in my spirit: Thou art my love, thou art my love, twenty times together, and still as they ran in my mind, they waxed stronger and warmer and began to make me look up; but being as yet between hope and fear, I still replied in my heart: But is it true, but is it true? at which that sentence fell upon me: "He wist not that it was true, which was done unto him of the angel" (Acts 12:9).

Then I began to give place to the Word, which with power, did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul: Thou art my love, thou art my love, and nothing shall separate thee from my love. And with that my heart was filled full of comfort and hope, and now I could believe that my sins would be forgiven me; yea, I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember, I could not tell how to contain till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of His love, and have told of His mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me. Wherefore I said in my soul, with much gladness: Well, would I had a pen and ink here, I would write this down before I go any further; for surely I will not forget this forty years hence. But, alas! within less than forty days I began to question all again; which made me begin to question all still.

Yet still at times I was helped to believe, that it was a true manifestation of grace unto my soul, though I had lost much of the life and savour of it. Now about a week or fortnight after this, I was much followed by this Scripture: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you" (Luke 22:31), and sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it were, call so strongly after me, that once, above all the rest, I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some man had, behind me, called me; being at a great distance, methought he called so loud. It came, as I have thought since, to have me stirred up to prayer and to watchfulness.

## Oh, For a Word of Hope!

*Grace Abounding*, par. 248-250

Bunyan describes the agony of the man struggling to believe in the "Word of Promise," in spite of his ever-recurring temptation to doubt that the promise is also for him.

BY THIS temptation (of despair) I was greatly holden off from my former foolish practice of putting by the Word of Promise when it came into my mind; for now, though I could not suck that comfort and sweetness from the promise, as I had done at other times, yet, like to a man a-sinking, I would catch at all I saw. Formerly I thought I might not meddle with the promise, unless I felt its comfort, but now it was no time thus to do. . . .

Now was I glad to catch at that Word which yet I feared I had no ground or right to own; and even to leap into the bosom of that promise that yet I feared did shut his heart against me. Now also I would labour to take the Word as God hath laid it down, without restraining the natural force of one syllable thereof. Oh! what did I see in that blessed sixth chapter of St. John: "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Now I began to consider with myself, that God hath a bigger mouth to speak with, than I had a heart to conceive with. I thought also with myself, that He spake not His words in haste, or in an unadvised heat, but with infinite wisdom and judgment, and in very truth and faithfulness.

I would in these days, often in my greatest agonies, even flounce towards the promise (as the horses do towards sound

ground, that yet stick in the mire), concluding (tho' as one almost bereft of his wits through fear) on this will I rest and stay, and leave the fulfilling of it to the God of Heaven that made it. Oh, for a word, a word to lean a weary soul upon, that it might not sink for ever! 'Twas that I hunted for.

## 79

## Parlor Theology

*The Pilgrim's Progress*  
Talkative, Faithful and Christian

This passage from *The Pilgrim's Progress* stages the meeting of Christian, Faithful and Talkative on the pilgrimage road. They engage in a conversation on religion, and Talkative . . . talks. But Christian sees through him and exposes him for what he is. Bunyan's devastating irony is aimed at those garrulous theologians of his time—and of all times—who relish Christian faith as a topic for learned disputations, while it ought to be the very life of the soul.

**T**ALKATIVE. To talk of things that are good, to me is very acceptable, with you or with any other; and I am glad that I have met with those that incline to so good a work; for, to speak the truth, there are but few that care thus to spend their time, (as they are in their travels), but choose much rather to be speaking of things to no profit; and this hath been a trouble for me.

*Faithful.* That is indeed a thing to be lamented; for what things so worthy of the use of the tongue and mouth of men on earth as are the things of the God of heaven? . . . But to be

profited by such things in our talk should be that which we design.

*Talkative.* That is it that I said; for to talk of such things is most profitable; for by so doing, a man may get knowledge of many things; as of the vanity of earthly things, and the benefit of things above. Thus, in general, but more particularly by this, a man may learn the necessity of the new birth, the insufficiency of our works, the need of Christ's righteousness, etc. Besides, by this a man may learn, by talk, what it is to repent, to believe, to pray, to suffer, or the like; by this also a man may learn what are the great promises and consolations of the Gospel, to his own comfort. Further, by this a man may learn to refute false opinions, to vindicate the truth, and also to instruct the ignorant. . . .

*Faithful.* Well, then, what is that one thing that we shall at this time found our discourse upon?

*Talkative.* What you will. I will talk of things heavenly, or things earthly; things moral, or things evangelical; things sacred, or things profane; things past, or things to come; things foreign, or things at home; things more essential, or things circumstantial; provided that all be done to our profit.

*Faithful.* Now did Faithful begin to wonder; and stepping to Christian, he said to him softly, What a brave companion have we got? Surely this man will make an excellent pilgrim.

*Christian.* At this Christian modestly smiled, and said, This man, with whom you are so taken, will beguile, with that tongue of his, twenty of them that know him not.

*Faithful.* Do you know him, then?

*Christian.* Know him! Yes, better than he knows himself.

*Faithful.* Pray, what is he?

*Christian.* His name is Talkative; he dwelleth in our town. . . . He is for any company, and for any talk; as he talketh now with you, so will he talk when he is on the ale bench; and the more drink he hath in his crown, the more of these things he hath in his mouth; religion hath no place in his heart, or house, or conversation; all he hath lieth in his tongue, and his religion is, to make a noise therewith.

William Law  
1686-1761

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Christ in Us  
*The Spirit of Prayer, I, 1*

This selection from the treatise entitled *The Spirit of Prayer* (which Law published in 1750) is an exposition on the parable of the vine and the branches, John 15:1 *et seq.* The point to be made is the reality of our mystical union with Christ. It is not enough for His righteousness to be credited to us; it has to become really ours, other than through a juridical fiction. In other words, it is not enough that Christ died and rose again *for* us. If we are to have a part with Him, He must be *in* us, for "a Christ not in us is the same thing as a Christ not ours."

"**I** AM the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5). Here Christ, our second Adam, uses this similitude to teach us that the new birth that we are to have from Him is real in the most strict and literal sense of the words, and that there is the same nearness of religion betwixt Him and his true disciples that there is betwixt the vine and its branches; that He does all that in us and for us which the vine does to its branches. Now, the life of the vine must be really derived into the branches; they cannot be branches till the birth of the vine is brought forth in them. And therefore, as sure as the birth of the vine

must be brought forth in the branches, so sure is it that we must be born again of our second Adam. And that unless the life of the holy Jesus be in us by a birth from Him we are as dead to Him and the Kingdom of God as the branch is dead to the vine from which it is broken off.

Again, our blessed Saviour says: "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The question is, when or how a man may be said to be without Christ. Consider again the vine and its branches. A branch can then only be said to be without its vine when the vegetable life of the vine is no longer in it. This is the only sense in which we can be said to be without Christ; when He is no longer in us as a principle of a heavenly life we are then without Him, and so can do nothing; that is, nothing that is good or holy. A Christ not in us is the same thing as a Christ not ours. If we are only so far with Christ as to own and receive the history of His birth, person, and character, if this is all that we have of Him, we are as much without Him, as much left to ourselves, as little helped by Him as those evil spirits which cried out, "We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). For those evil spirits and all the fallen angels are totally without Christ, have no benefit from Him, for this one and only reason, because Christ is not in them; nothing of the Son of God is generated or born in them. Therefore, every son of Adam that has not something of the Son of God generated or born with him is as much without Christ, as destitute of all help from Him, as those evil spirits who could only make an outward confession of Him.

It is the language of Scripture that Christ in us is our hope of glory; that Christ formed in us, living, growing, and raising His own life and spirit in us, is our only salvation. And, indeed, all this is plain from the nature of the thing; for since the serpent, sin, death, and hell are all essentially within us, the very growth of our nature, must not our redemption be equally inward—an inward essential death to this state of our souls and an inward growth of a contrary life within us? If Adam was only an outward person, of his whole nature was not our nature, born in us and derived from him into us, it would

be nonsense to say that his fall is our fall. So in like manner, if Christ, our second Adam, was only an outward person, if He entered not as deeply into our nature as the first Adam does, if we have not as really from Him a new inward, spiritual man as we have outward flesh and blood from Adam, what ground could there be to say that our righteousness is from Him, as our sin is from Adam?

## 81

## The Soul's Divine Center

*The Spirit of Prayer, I, 2*

"The Soul's Divine Center" echoes the terminology of Boehme and the German mystics of the fourteenth century. The divine-human encounter takes place within the soul—in its "depth," "center," "fund," "bottom"—where God speaks His words of life. Law faithfully reproduces what he has read. We shall never know, however, to what extent he has actually shared in the experience of the masters.

Poor sinner! consider the treasure thou hast within thee; the Saviour of the world, the eternal Word of God lies hid in thee, as a spark of the divine nature which is to overcome sin and death and hell within thee, and generate the life of heaven again in thy soul. Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its Saviour, its God within itself. Thou seest, hearest, and feelest nothing of God, because thou seekest for Him abroad with thy outward eyes, thou seekest for Him in books, in controversies, in the church, and outward exercises, but there thou wilt not find Him till thou hast first found Him in thy heart. Seek for Him in thy heart, and thou wilt never seek in vain, for there He dwells, there is the seat of His light and Holy Spirit.

For this turning to the light and Spirit of God within thee is thy only true turning unto God; there is no other way of finding Him but in that place where He dwelleth in thee. For though God be everywhere present, yet He is only present to thee in the deepest and most central part of thy soul. Thy natural senses cannot possess God or unite thee to Him; nay, thy inward faculties of understanding, will, and memory, can only reach after God, but cannot be the place of His habitation in thee. But there is a root or depth in thee from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a centre or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the centre, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity, I had almost said the infinity of thy soul; for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it or give it any rest but the infinity of God. In this depth of the soul the Holy Trinity brought forth its own living image in the first created man, bearing in himself a living representation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and this was his dwelling in God and God in him. This was the kingdom of God within him, and made Paradise within him. This depth or centre of his soul having lost its God, was shut up in death and darkness and became a prisoner in an earthly animal that only excelled its brethren, the beasts, in an upright form and a serpentine subtlety. Thus ended the fall of man. But from that moment that the God of mercy inspake into Adam the Bruiser of the Serpent, from that moment all the riches and treasures of the divine nature came again into man, as a seed of salvation sown into the centre of the soul, and only lies hidden there in every man till he desires to rise from his fallen state and to be born again from above.

Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and Christ, who from all eternity has been espoused to thy soul, shall give thee light. Begin to search and dig in thine own field for this pearl of eternity that lies hidden in it; it cannot cost thee too much, nor canst thou buy it too dear, for it is *all*; and when thou hast found it thou wilt know that all which thou hast sold or given away for it is as mere a nothing as a bubble upon the water.

John Wesley  
1703-1791

82

## On Bearing Christian Witness

*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, No. 19*

This passage is Wesley's definition of perfection—"love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words or actions." It cannot but bring a man to bear witness to his faith. Note how Wesley, although he had little sympathy for the "mystics," spontaneously uses the words which normally belong to the language of mysticism: the "fire" burning within, the "torrent" of God's kindness which carries a man away from self, and such similes.

PERFECTION is nothing higher and nothing lower than this—the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. It is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.

Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?—At first, perhaps, he would scarce be able to refrain, the fire would be so hot within him; his desire to declare the loving-kindness of the Lord carrying him away like a torrent. But afterwards he might: and then it would be advisable not to speak of it to them that know not God (it is most likely

it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme); nor to others, without particular reason, without some good in view. And then he should have especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting; to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God.

But would it not be better to be entirely silent, not to speak of it at all?—By silence he might avoid many crosses, which will naturally and necessarily ensue, if he simply declare, even among believers, what God hath wrought in his soul. If, therefore, such a one were to confer with flesh and blood, he would be entirely silent. But this could not be done with a clear conscience; for undoubtedly he ought to speak. Men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel; much less does the all-wise God. He does not raise such a monument of His power and love, to hide it from all mankind: rather He intends it as a general blessing to those who are simple of heart. He designs thereby not barely the happiness of that individual person, but the animating and encouraging others to follow after the same blessing. His will is, “that many shall see it” and rejoice, “and put their trust in the Lord” (Ps. 40:3). Nor does anything under heaven more quicken the desires of those who are justified, than to converse with those whom they believe to have experienced a still higher salvation. This places that salvation full in their view, and increases their hunger and thirst after it; an advantage which must have been entirely lost, had the person so saved buried himself in silence.

## 83

### On Christian Resignation *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, No. 25

Wesley gives a straightforward description of true Christian resignation to the will of God—a familiar theme of the mystics, developed here without the

quietistic niceties of Fénelon (see selection 73, "Pure Love and Suffering").

**T**RUE resignation consists in a thorough conformity to the whole will of God, who wills and does all (except sin) which comes to pass in the world. In order to do this, we have only to embrace all events, good and bad, as His will.

In the greatest afflictions which can befall the just, either from heaven or earth, they remain immovable in peace, and perfectly submissive to God by an inward, loving regard to Him, uniting in one all the powers of their souls.

We ought quietly to suffer whatever befalls us; to bear the defects of others and our own, to confess them to God in secret prayer, or with groans which cannot be uttered; but never to speak a sharp or peevish word, nor to murmur or repine; but thoroughly willing that God should treat you in the manner that pleases Him. We are His lambs, and therefore ought to be ready to suffer, even to the death, without complaining.

We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since He has borne our infirmities, we may well bear those of each other for His sake.

To abandon all, to strip one's self of all, in order to seek and to follow Jesus Christ naked to Bethlehem, where He was born; naked to the hall where He was scourged; and naked to Calvary, where He died on the cross, is so great a mercy, that neither the thing, nor the knowledge of it, is given to any, but through faith in the Son of God.

## 84

### A Christian's Good Works *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, No. 25*

Here is a breviary of the doctrine of "good works," based on experience and intensely practical. It deals with the motivation of Christian service and with

some of its essential aspects: constancy, vigilance, disinterestedness, dedication with prayer and thanksgiving.

THE WORDS of St. Paul, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3), show us the necessity of eyeing God in our good works, and even in our minutest thoughts: knowing that none are pleasing to Him but those which He forms in us and with us. From hence we learn that we cannot serve Him, unless He use our tongue, hands and heart, to do by Himself and His Spirit whatever He would have us to do.

If we were not utterly impotent, our good works would be our own property; whereas now they belong wholly to God, because they proceed from Him and His grace: while raising our works, and making them all divine, He honors Himself in us through them.

One of the principal rules of religion is, to lose no occasion of serving God. And since He is invisible to our eyes, we are to serve Him in our neighbor: which He receives as if done to Himself in person, standing visibly before us.

God does not love men that are inconstant, nor good works that are intermittent. Nothing is pleasing to Him but what has a resemblance of His own immutability.

A constant attention to the work which God entrusts us with is a mark of solid piety.

Love fasts when it can, and as much as it can. It leads to all the ordinances of God, and employs itself in all the outward works whereof it is capable. It flies, as it were, like Elijah over the plain, to find God upon His holy mountain.

God is so great, that He communicates greatness to the least thing that is done for His service.

Happy are they who are sick, yea or lose their life, for having done a good work.

God frequently conceals the part which His children have in the conversion of other souls. Yet one may boldly say, that

person who long groans before Him for the conversion of another, whenever that soul is converted to God, is one of the chief causes of it.

Charity cannot be practised right, unless, first, we exercise it the moment God gives the occasion; and secondly, retire the instant after to offer it to God by humble thanksgiving. And this for three reasons—First, to render Him what we have received from Him. The second, to avoid the dangerous temptation which springs from the very goodness of these works. And the third, to unite ourselves to God, in whom the soul expands itself in prayer, with all the graces we have received, and the good works we have done, to draw from Him new strength against the bad effects which these very works may produce in us, if we do not make use of the antidotes which God has ordained against these poisons. The true means to be filled anew with the riches of grace is thus to strip ourselves of it; and without this it is extremely difficult not to grow faint in the practice of good works.

Good works do not receive their last perfection till they, as it were, lose themselves in God. This is a kind of death to them, resembling that of our bodies, which will not attain their highest life, their immortality, till they lose themselves in the glory of our souls, or rather of God, wherewith they shall be filled. And it is only what they had of earthly and mortal which good works lose by this spiritual death.

Fire is the symbol of love; and the love of God is the principle and the end of all our good works. But truth surpasses figure; and the fire of divine love has this advantage over material fire, that it can reascend to its source, and raise thither with it all the good works which it produces. And by this means it prevents their being corrupted by pride, vanity, or any evil mixture. But this cannot be done otherwise than by making these good works in a spiritual manner die in God, by a deep gratitude, which plunges the soul in Him as in an abyss, with all that it is, and all the grace and works for which it is indebted to Him; a gratitude whereby the soul seems to empty

itself of them, that they may return to their source, as rivers seem willing to empty themselves when they pour themselves with all their waters into the sea.

When we have received any favor from God, we ought to retire, if not in our closets, into our hearts, and say, "I come, Lord, to restore to Thee what Thou hast given; and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or earth in Thy presence, but a void capable of being filled with Thee and by Thee; as the air which is void and dark is capable of being filled with the light of the sun, who withdraws it every day to restore it the next, there being nothing in the air that either appropriates this light or resists it? Oh, give me the same facility of receiving and restoring Thy grace and good works! I say, *Thine*; for I acknowledge the root from which they spring is in Thee, and not in me."

## The Last Fifty Years

THERE seems to be in our days a considerable renewal of interest in mysticism and the cultivation of spiritual life; too considerable, perhaps, for the corresponding literary production is often superficial and at times irrelevant. There are more speculations on mysticism and more well-meaning—but somehow gratuitous—pieces of advice on successful Christian living than there are personal accounts of religious experience. Two tendencies, widely represented, are to be deplored. The first one can be characterized as spiritual dilettantism. Some literati, who by their own admission are not existentially involved in Christian mysticism, examine it from the outside, as one would examine some exotic curiosity. There is in this attitude something like a hangover of romanticism. In the nineteenth century, poets and artists were in love with a rose-colored Islam, complete with minarets and muezzins, although, of course, they did not take to fasting during the moon of Ramadan. Today, it is more fashionable to head for the waters of the Ganges. There are even western converts to Yoga practices, who seek the liberation of their soul from earthly contingencies—a few of them much in earnest and the greater number, we surmise, for the thrill of novelty. Now, to read the Christian mystics with the same disposition of mind as that of amateur Hindus or Buddhists who read the sacred texts of India, leads rigorously nowhere.

Among the modern students of Christian mysticism who are in earnest, another deformation is frequently observed. Their genuine interest in spiritual matters and their personal

piety seem to be diverted toward secondary goals. They aim at a fuller integration of personality, at being spiritually and physically fit, at achieving peace of mind, etc.—all worthy objectives, but which at best are concomitants, or by-products, or consequences of that alone which is supreme and final, namely a personal relationship with God.

I beg not to be misunderstood, when denouncing actual deviations from a theological interpretation of Christian mysticism. This does not mean that the concern of our contemporaries with spiritual reality has lost its bearings altogether. There is probably about as much true faith in our world today as there was at any given period of Christian history. Unfortunately, we are too much in the thick of things, and we lack the proper perspective rightly to measure or appraise the various currents of modern spirituality. Only time will tell for sure.

The spiritual vitality of Eastern Orthodoxy is undeniable. But I confess not to be well acquainted with its most recent developments. Mystical literature may be less abundant than in the West, for the simple reason that Orthodox piety thrives on the liturgy rather than on private theological elaborations, and it feeds instinctively on the tradition of the Church Fathers and of the fourth Gospel.

The orientation of the Roman Church may be summarized as follows. A serious effort is being made to find a place for the study of spirituality or mysticism within the framework of theology as a whole. Whereas some theologians have distinguished between ordinary Christian life and Christian mysticism (the latter being regarded as an exceptional endowment), the opposite tendency, which maintains the basic unity of spiritual life in all its manifestations and at all stages of its development, seems to be prevailing. While there is much attachment to traditional exercises, more or less stereotyped, such as meditations and retreats, a broader conception of the liturgy as the expression of community spirit in life and worship, rather than as a set of rubrics or recipes for ecclesiastical art, is reshaping the piety of the younger generations.

The situation in Protestantism is more complex. Little in-

terest in mysticism can be expected from those theological circles which are satisfied with the frozen emphasis on salvation of Protestant scholasticism. The theological systems which grew out of post-Kantian ideologies—bound as they are to empirical or historical categories—are no more capable of grasping the significance of the religious, transcendent nature of Christian spirituality. It is more difficult to see why so-called neo-orthodoxy discountenances mysticism. Emil Brunner, for instance, has no words harsh enough for "the mystics." And yet the leitmotiv of his theology, the "divine encounter," is mysticism. Perhaps he is suspicious of whatever seems to imply in fallen man a "built-in" ability to seek and to find God. Or is he wary of the mystics' attempt at describing their encounter with the wholly Other?

Ecumenism and sporadic community movements in British and continental Protestantism are influential in building up a climate in which the spiritual resources of Christian faith will again be understood and put to work in their fullness. Definite trends are already observable. Spiritual life is life as a *whole*, and not the cultivation of an ideology with or without the benefit of a theological frame of reference. It cannot be divorced from ethical points of view. It has a direct bearing on social activities. It is founded on the whole Gospel, and repudiates any artificial cleavage between this- and other-worldliness.

It is not possible to give voice to all parties concerned or to all trends represented in the contemporary scene. The three authors I have chosen, however, may illustrate at least some of the positive tendencies of Christian spirituality described in the last paragraph.

The unique concern of Quakers with the reality of spiritual life provides so rich a field from which to choose that two of the three authors chosen to represent major trends of contemporary mysticism happen to be Quakers.

Rufus M. Jones was born in 1863 in a small Quaker community of the State of Maine, named South China. As a youth, he was deeply impressed by the "first day" meetings, with their

period of silence. He studied at Haverford College from which he graduated in 1885. Then he spent a year at the University of Heidelberg, followed by postgraduate work at Harvard. Several trips to Europe and a period of study in Oxford kept him abreast of philosophical, social and religious developments abroad. He was for many years a professor of philosophy at Haverford College. His chief interest was to analyze and to interpret the various types of direct approach to religion. His studies on the history and the nature of mysticism are far removed from abstract theorizing. He was moved by an intense desire to lead his fellow men, regardless of their denominational or theological allegiance, toward the inner religion which was his. Within the Quaker circles in which he moved, he consistently fought the temptation of "ingrownness," for he aimed at developing contacts with the Christian world at large—or, more simply, with the world. His social concern materialized in the foundation of the American Friends Service Committee in 1917. Dr. Jones died in 1948.

His considerable written work consists of autobiographical accounts, of technical contributions to the history of mystical religion and of Quakerism and of more popular treatises on the principles of spiritual life. One of the latter, entitled *The Luminous Trail*, was published a year before his death. It is a gallery of portraits of men and women, from the Apostle Paul to Catherine of Siena to Boehme to Horace Bushnell, who saw the light that shines not to the eyes of flesh but which helped to build the Church invisible above the dogmatic storms and the ecclesiastical revolutions in which they were themselves involved.

Albert Schweitzer is one of those men who do not fit in any ready-made classification. Encyclopedia editors refer to him as a theologian, an interpreter of Johann Sebastian Bach, a missionary and a hospital physician. This listing tends to create a wrong impression. We had better stop thinking of Schweitzer as a Jack-of-all-trades, however successful. The common root of his many activities is a Christian inspiration of uncommon

depth, which seeks intellectual expression through his theology, which sings in his soul and fills with harmony the concert halls where he is playing, which warms his heart and guides his hands as he visits his patients or bends over the operating table. He was born in 1875 at Kaysersberg in Alsace, which was then under the political domination of the German Reich. His father was the pastor of the evangelical church of the village. In 1893 Albert Schweitzer entered the University of Strasbourg, where he studied philosophy and theology. In 1898 he was granted a fellowship for advanced theological studies, which he completed while preaching on a regular schedule in the church of Saint Nicholas. During this period of his life he was much concerned with the theological aspects of New Testament criticism, and he studied the theory and practice of organ music. Schweitzer did not settle long in the charge of *Privat Dozent* to which he had been nominated in 1902. Quite unexpectedly, he resolved to go to the mission field as a physician and registered at the School of Medicine, where he studied from 1905 to 1912 while working on his edition of Bach and giving recitals. In 1913 he left for French Equatorial Africa under the auspices of the Paris Missionary Society, and founded the hospital of Lambaréné. His activities were drastically curtailed during the First World War, when the French administration imposed strict controls over German nationals and in 1917 shipped him to an internment camp in France. When Alsace passed under French rule in 1918, he was free again, and he prepared to return to the mission field. He lectured, preached and gave concerts, to raise funds for his hospital, and he returned to Africa in 1924. Since then, most of his time has been spent there—interrupted only by lecture and concert trips to Europe and to America.

He who wants to penetrate into the intimacy of Schweitzer must read his autobiographical pieces, especially *Out of My Life and Thought*, the more descriptive *On the Edge of the Primaeval Forest*, and such writings as *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization* and *Civilization and Ethics*, in which technical considerations often alternate with the

author's personal meditations. They reveal a mind avid for truth, never satisfied with premature theological dogmatism or conventional ecclesiasticism, always on the lookout and always grateful for whatever piece of evidence he may gather, not for the sake of building systems but in order to be true to life—for Schweitzer regards life as the unique and universal gift of God.

We find in Thomas R. Kelly a similar urge toward the fullness of Christian living and Christian service. Like Schweitzer, he had to grope in relative darkness before hitting upon the road which God wanted him to tread. This happened toward the end of his short but rich life. He was born in 1893 on a farm near Chillicothe, Ohio. Some six years after the death of the father in 1897, his mother moved to Wilmington, Ohio, where Kelly attended a Quaker school and entered college. He graduated with a major in chemistry in 1913, and took one year of special studies at Haverford College, where he became intimately acquainted with Rufus Jones. During a two-year instructorship at Pickering College, in Canada, he felt attracted to a life of direct religious service. He entered Hartford Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1919, and where he did graduate work after his marriage in Wilmington. The events of the First World War had impressed him deeply, and he spent fifteen months in Berlin in 1924 and 1925, organizing on a permanent basis the work of the American Friends Service Committee in Central Europe. Back in the States, he alternately taught and studied philosophy at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, at Harvard, and at Wellesley, without deciding where to settle permanently. In 1935 he was appointed to the University of Hawaii but had to return to the United States on account of ill health. The decisive years came after 1936, when he joined the faculty of Haverford College. That was Hitler's time, and once more Kelly was called to Germany to get in touch with German Quakers, and to give help to all who wanted to keep their souls. He had by now discovered for himself the deeper aspects of the life of faith and its relationship to Christian concern and commitment.

He was ready to share with others the secret of his vision, and to devote himself to their service with a full awareness of where he stood and whereto he was to guide them. On his return from Germany he addressed numerous Quaker meetings and conferences, and some of his lectures were provisionally gathered under the title *A Testament of Devotion*, after he had succumbed to a heart attack in 1941. It is from this posthumous collection that our selections have been chosen.

Rufus M. Jones  
1863-1948

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## Positive Mysticism

*The Luminous Trail*, Chap. II

"Positive Mysticism" is a long excerpt from the opening sections of *The Luminous Trail*. The author is reacting strongly against the tendency of several moderns to exaggerate the virtue of paradox (as the only possible expression which does not betray an unutterable experience) or to extol the negative approach of Dionysian theology as *the* mystical way. Such tendencies are not unrelated to the exotic curiosity denounced at the beginning of the present chapter. Dr. Jones could not refrain from taking a pot shot at Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*. Of course, there is a legitimate use for paradox. If we had not been taught the negative way of Dionysius and Meister Eckhart, we should be the losers. There is truth in the jingle: "Whatever your mind comes at, I tell you flat, God is not that." Yet—and this is the burden of this selection—the negative way is not the only way. It is not the best way. It is not the Christian way. For negation alone would chase God out of history and estrange men from God. The Christian way is the way of the Incarnation, the way of the "Divine Yes."

**T**HERE can be no question that the youth of this generation have been saying *yes* to the perilous calls to danger and death. Now we are girding ourselves to the task of rebuilding our shattered world, and the first step in that tremendous busi-

ness is to rebuild ourselves on great lines of life. Whatever creed we may recite, our primary faith ought to be in the potential greatness of life. We must now be Yea-sayers to the calls of life. . . .

Strangely enough the world has seemed to prefer *No* to *Yes*. . . . For centuries the high road of the soul to its ultimate goal of life has been the *via negativa*—the way of *No*. . . . “Naught” the self, stop thinking, give up reason, deny desires, cease to will the particular, attain detachment. . . . But, pushed to its limit, this aim at self-naughting, at the elimination of “I” and “me” and “my,” at the obliteration of being a separate self, means, if it is taken seriously, that you cease to be a person at all, and I assume that the major business we are here for in this world is to be a rightly fashioned person as an organ of the divine purpose. Isn’t it possible that there is a perennial philosophy, equally mystical, and equally true, that has always been concerned with the affirmation and true realization of personality? Isn’t it possible that the earnest expectation of the whole creation is waiting for the manifestation of sons of God—fully completed persons? . . .

The early interpreters of Christianity were obviously exponents of the *Divine Yes*, for as St. Paul declared, “The Divine Yes has at last sounded,” for in Christ is the Yes of God (2 Cor. 1:20, Moffatt). . . . The great passage in Galatians, which is sometimes cited as St. Paul’s *via negativa*, is in fact an extraordinary instance of affirmation and expansion of personal life: “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). This is no negation of personality, but a triumphant type of immensely expanded personality. St. Paul’s entire interpretation of the Spirit—whether it be the Spirit of Christ, or the Spirit, or Holy Spirit—is one of his major contributions to the present continuing Life of God, operating directly on the lives of men. It is primary mysticism, and it is *the Yes of God*. We walk in the Spirit; we produce the fruits of the Spirit; we have access through the Spirit to the Father. God has sent forth the Spirit into our hearts which cry in response *Abba*, i.e., Father!

This isn't speculation; it isn't argument; it isn't a credal statement. It is a profound experience of the reality St. Paul is telling about.

It seems probable, though it cannot be proved by tangible evidence, that St. John's profound interpretation of the Spirit is deeply influenced by St. Paul. His Gospel is probably an Ephesian Gospel, charged throughout with a mystical tinge. The statement reported from the conversation on Jacob's well-curb takes us farther on the way to "the Divine Yes" than any other in this Gospel: God is essentially Spirit and man can join with Him in vital fellowship, for he, too, is spirit (John 4:24). This report means that religion is founded on a concrete Infinite, for Spirit is a concrete reality, not on an abstract and "naughted" Absolute, and intercommunion is an intelligible process of Like with like. It comes, therefore, as no surprise to have the announcement made by this Gospel that "This is life eternal to know Thee," the only real God through Jesus-Christ who was sent to reveal Him (John 17:3). The word "know" in this passage is a progressive verb, which means *to be in the process of apprehending*. It is used in the same sense in the text, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth (thus possessed) shall make you free" (John 8:32).

One of the central features of this Gospel is its interpretation of the Spirit as an intimate Presence in the life of the believer, and as a begetter of love and peace, and a guide into all truth: "He shall guide (shall be guiding) you into all truth" (John 16:13). He will be the eternal revealer of righteousness and convicter of sin. Spirit here, in this Gospel, is thought of as God actively present and inwardly operating in the responsive human soul. It is the Immanuel-God, the God-with-us, here and now and forever, not alone on the day of Pentecost, but wherever the door of a receptive soul is open to receive the Guest. No, we do not need to ask the remote stars, or the unknown regions beyond the stars, if they have a rumor of the God we seek—the Word is nigh thee, the living Spirit is in thy heart. It is not a hiding God; it is a self-revealing God.

This Ephesian Gospel takes up and carries on St. Paul's im-

mense conception of Grace. It is one of the most unique aspects of the New Testament revelation of God. He is not remote, withdrawn, unapproachable, abstract, unrelated, quality-less. He is essentially *Love*—*Agapé*. The great word *Father*, used for God, which breaks in everywhere in this revelation, is not thought of as the Begetter, as the Origin. He is revealed as the eternal Lover. *Agapé* is a unique type of love, a love that pours itself out regardless of merit, or desert—it floods out like the sun to reach the just and the unjust. If we are looking for the *Divine Yes*, here it is, in all its splendor. Down across all the centuries—often, to be sure, to a heedless world—this message of suffering, forgiving grace, abounding Love, the *Agapé* of God, has made saints and martyrs, and it has been a perennial note in the lives of Christian mystics.

It might be well to dwell briefly on the positive and concrete aspects which are attributed to Christ as the revealer of God. There is quite an amazing list of *I am* passages in this Gospel, all of which bear on the concreteness of the Revelation. "I am the Light of the world." "I am the Light of life." "I am the Bread of life." "I am the living Water." "I am the Door," a door that swings both ways. "I am the good Shepherd." "I am the Way." "I am the Truth." "I am the Life." "I am the Vinestock." "Where I am, there you shall be also." "Before Abraham was, *I am*." These twelve *I am*s are cumulative interpretations of a Divine Revelation, for Christ is what He is only as a revealer of the One and only God, who is His Father. No one of these *I am*s is more important for this crisis in human history than the great saying of His: "I am the Light of the world—the Light of life." He placards to our eyes the splendor and goal of life toward which the world ought to be moving. He is like a sudden sunrise breaking in on the darkness, but St. John insists that "the darkness does not put it out" (John 1:5, Moffatt). I am not claiming that this is mysticism, though there are mystical implications pervading it. What I am concerned to claim is that this message about God from these two apostolic men has through all the centuries profoundly influenced the Christian mystics and tended to introduce a note of affirmation.

Albert Schweitzer  
1875-

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Reverence for Life  
*Out of My Life and Thought*, Chap. XIII, XXI

Schweitzer tells how he suddenly became aware, as by unexpected illumination, of the concept of "Reverence for Life." It may not be superfluous to stress that for Schweitzer this is no abstraction. Hence, the theorists who try to trace it back to Hindu or Buddhist doctrine are probably on the wrong track. In Schweitzer's thought, "Reverence for Life" assumes a Biblical dimension; it is God's own formula for the order of creation. The surgeon of Lambaréne shows himself to be spiritually kin to Francis of Assisi. But he is infinitely more practical than the *poverello*, and he made sure that his Samaritan-like deeds would be medically sound. There is in him no mawkish sentimentality, no denial of the reality of sin, suffering and sorrow in the name of pseudo-metaphysical speculations, but rather a virile passion born of love. Schweitzer belongs together with two legendary saints of the early Church, whom a Greek *Menologion* hails with these words: "Kosmas and Damianos, unmercenary healers of men and beasts."

I WAS staying with my wife on the coast at Cape Lopez for the sake of her health—it was in September 1915—when I was summoned to visit Madame Pelot, the ailing wife of a mis-

sionary, at N'Gômô, about 160 miles upstream. The only means of conveyance I could find was a small steamer, towing an overladen barge, which was on the point of starting. . . . Slowly we crept upstream, laboriously feeling—it was the dry season—for the channels between the sandbanks. Lost in thought I sat on the deck of the barge, struggling to find the elementary and universal conception of the ethical which I had not discovered in any philosophy. Sheet after sheet I covered with disconnected sentences, merely to keep myself concentrated on the problem. Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase, "Reverence for life." The iron door had yielded: the path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the idea in which world- and life-affirmation and ethics are contained side by side! Now I knew that the world-view of ethical world- and life-affirmation, together with its ideals of civilization, is founded in thought. . . .

Descartes makes thinking start from the sentence "I think; so I must exist" (*Cogito, ergo sum*), and with his beginning thus chosen he finds himself irretrievably on the road to the abstract. Out of this empty, artificial act of thinking there can result, of course, nothing which bears on the relation of man to himself and to the universe. Yet in reality the most immediate act of consciousness has some content. To think means to think something. The most immediate fact of man's consciousness is the assertion: "I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live," and it is as will-to-live that man conceives himself during every moment that he spends in meditating on himself and the world around him. . . .

The idea of Reverence for Life offers itself as the realistic answer to the realistic question of how man and the world are related to each other. Of the world man knows only that everything which exists is, like himself, a manifestation of the will-to-live. With this world he stands in a relation of passivity and of activity. On the one hand he is subordinate to the

course of events which is given in this totality of life; on the other hand he is capable of affecting the life which comes within his reach by hampering or promoting it, by destroying or maintaining it.

The one possible way of giving meaning to his existence is that of raising his natural relation to the world to a spiritual one. As a being in a passive relation to the world he comes into a spiritual relation to it by resignation. True resignation consists in this: that man, feeling his subordination to the course of world-happenings, wins his way to inward freedom from the fortunes which shape the outward side of his existence. Inward freedom means that he finds strength to deal with everything that is hard in his lot, in such a way that it all helps to make him a deeper and more inward person, to purify him, and to keep him calm and peaceful. Resignation, therefore, is the spiritual and ethical affirmation of one's own existence. Only he who has gone through the stage of resignation is capable of world-affirmation.

As a being in an active relation to the world he comes into a spiritual relation with it by not living for himself alone, but feeling himself one with all life that comes within his reach. He will feel all that life's experiences as his own, he will give it all the help that he possibly can, and will feel all the saving and promotion of life that he has been able to effect as the deepest happiness that can ever fall to his lot.

Let a man once begin to think about the mystery of his life and the links which connect him with the life that fills the world, and he cannot but bring to bear upon his own life and all other life that comes within his reach the principle of Reverence for Life, and manifest this principle by ethical world-and life-affirmation expressed in action. Existence will thereby become harder for him in every respect than it would be if he lived for himself, but at the same time it will be richer, more beautiful, and happier. It will become, instead of mere living, a real experience of life. . . .

It may seem, at first glance, as if Reverence for Life were something too general and too lifeless to provide the content of

a living ethic. But thinking has no need to trouble as to whether its expressions sound living enough, so long as they hit the mark and have life in them. Anyone who comes under the influence of the ethic of Reverence for Life will very soon be able to detect, thanks to what that ethic demands from him, what fire glows in the lifeless expression. The ethic of Reverence for Life is the ethic of Love widened into universality. It is the ethic of Jesus, now recognized as a necessity of thought.

Objection is made to this ethic that it sets too high a value on natural life. To this it can retort that the mistake made by all previous systems of ethics has been the failure to recognize that life as such is the mysterious value with which they have to deal. All spiritual life meets us within natural life. Reverence for Life, therefore, is applied to natural life and spiritual life alike. In the parable of Jesus, the shepherd saves not merely the soul of the lost sheep but the whole animal. The stronger the reverence for natural life, the stronger grows also that for spiritual life.

The ethic of Reverence for Life is found particularly strange because it establishes no dividing-line between higher and lower, between more valuable and less valuable life. For this omission it has its reasons.

To undertake to lay down universally valid distinctions of value between different kinds of life will end in judging them by the greater or lesser distance at which they seem to stand from us human beings—as we ourselves judge. But that is a purely subjective criterion. Who among us knows what significance any other kind of life has in itself, and as a part of the universe? . . . To the man who is truly ethical all life is sacred, including that which from the human point of view seems lower in the scale. He makes distinctions only as each case comes before him, and under the pressure of necessity, as, for example, when it falls to him to decide which of two lives he must sacrifice in order to preserve the other. But all through this series of decisions he is conscious of acting on subjective grounds and arbitrarily, and knows that he bears the responsibility for the life which is sacrificed. . . . If he has been touched

by the ethic of Reverence for Life, he injures and destroys life only under a necessity which he cannot avoid, and never from thoughtlessness. So far as he is a free man he uses every opportunity of tasting the blessedness of being able to assist life and avert from it suffering and destruction. . . .

The ethic, then (of Reverence for Life), is not "according to reason," but non-rational and enthusiastic. It marks off no skillfully defined circle of duties, but lays upon each individual the responsibility for all life within his reach, and compels him to devote himself to helping it.

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### Nature of Christianity *Out of My Life and Thought, Chap. XXI*

This piece, on the nature of Christianity, demands to be understood in contrast with various theological systems which seem to exasperate Schweitzer: those which distinguish between the religious and the ethical or which regard the ethic of Jesus as irrelevant for human life. Schweitzer views Christian faith primarily as a religious ethic founded in love.

**T**HE ESSENTIAL element in Christianity as it was preached by Jesus and as it is comprehended by thought, is this, that it is only through love that we can attain to communion with God. All living knowledge of God rests upon this foundation: that we experience Him in our lives as Will-to-Love.

Anyone who has recognized that the idea of Love is the spiritual beam of light which reaches us from the Infinite, ceases to demand from religion that it shall offer him complete knowledge of the supra-sensible. He ponders, indeed, on the great questions: what the meaning is of the evil in the world;

how in God, the great First Cause, the will-to-create and the will-to-love are one; in what relation the spiritual and the material life stand to one another, and in what way our existence is transitory and yet eternal. But he is able to leave these questions on one side, however painful it may be to give up all hope of answers to them. In the knowledge of spiritual existence in God through love he possesses the one thing needful. "Love never faileth: but . . . whether there be knowledge it shall be done away," says St. Paul (1 Cor. 13:8).

The deeper piety is, the humbler are its claims with regard to the knowledge of the supra-sensible. It is like a path which winds between the hills instead of going over them. . . .

What Christianity needs is that it shall be filled to overflowing with the spirit of Jesus, and in the strength of that shall spiritualize itself into a living religion of inwardness and love, such as its destined purpose should make it. Only as such can it become the leaven in the spiritual life of mankind. What has been passing for Christianity during these nineteen centuries is merely a beginning, full of weaknesses and mistakes, not a full-grown Christianity springing from the spirit of Jesus.

Because I am devoted to Christianity in deep affection, I am trying to serve it with loyalty and sincerity. In no wise do I undertake to enter the lists on its behalf with the crooked and fragile thinking of Christian apologetic, but I call on it to set itself right in the spirit of sincerity with its past and with thought in order that it may thereby become conscious of its true nature.

Thomas R. Kelly  
1893-1941

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## Levels of Life

*A Testament of Devotion*, pp. 35-37

"Levels of Life" reveals to our contemporaries caught in the whirlpool of action—business, technical or social achievements—that there is a deeper level, where man finds his real self and discovers the true significance of the world in the divine light that shines within.

**T**HERE is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship, and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings.

The secular world of today values and cultivates only the first level, assured that *there* is where the real business of mankind is done, and scorns, or smiles in tolerant amusement, at the cultivation of the second level—a luxury enterprise, a vestige of superstition, an occupation for special temperaments. But in a deeply religious culture men know that the deep level of prayer and of divine attendance is the most important thing in the world. It is at this deep level that the real business of life is

determined. The secular mind is an abbreviated, fragmentary mind, building only upon a part of man's nature and neglecting a part—the most glorious part—of man's nature, powers and resources. The religious mind involves the whole of man, embraces his relations with time within their true ground and setting in the Eternal Lover. It ever keeps close to the fountains of divine creativity. In lowness it knows joys and stabilities, peace and assurances, that are utterly incomprehensible to the secular mind. It lives in resources and powers that make individuals radiant and triumphant, groups tolerant and bonded together in mutual concern, and is bestirred to an outward life of unremitting labor.

Between the two levels is fruitful interplay, but ever the accent must be upon the deeper level, where the soul ever dwells in the presence of the Holy One. For the religious man is forever bringing all affairs of the first level down into the Light, holding them there in the Presence, reseeing them and the whole of the world of men and things in a new and overturning way, and responding to them in spontaneous, incisive and simple ways of love and faith. Facts remain facts, when brought into the Presence in the deeper level, but their value, their significance, is wholly realigned. Much apparent wheat becomes utter chaff, and some chaff becomes wheat. Imposing powers? They are out of the Life, and must crumble. Lost causes? If God be for them, who can be against them? Rationally plausible futures? They are weakened or certified in the dynamic Life and Light. Tragic suffering? Already He is there, and we actively move, in His tenderness, toward the sufferers. Hopeless debauchees? These are children of God, His concern and ours. Inexorable laws of nature? The dependable framework for divine reconstruction. The fall of a sparrow? The Father's love. For faith and hope and love for all things are engendered in the soul, as we practice their submission and our own to the Light Within, as we humbly see all things, even darkly and as through a glass, yet through the eye of God.

## The World Reappraised

*A Testament of Devotion*, p. 47

"The World Reappraised" goes one step further than the previous selection. It states how on the basis of the discovery in "Levels of Life," man is to reorientate his life and actions toward his true center of gravity—which is none other than God.

**G**UIDANCE of life by the Light within is not exhausted as is too frequently supposed, in special leadings toward particular tasks. It begins first of all in a mass revision of our total reaction to the world. Worshipping in the light we become new creatures, making wholly new and astonishing responses to the entire outer setting of life. These responses are not reasoned out. They are, in large measure, spontaneous reactions of felt incompatibility between "the world's" judgments of value and the Supreme Value we adore deep in the Center. There is a total Instruction as well as specific instructions from the Light within. The dynamic illumination from the deeper level is shed upon the judgments of the surface level, and lo, the "former things are passed away," behold, they are become new (Rev. 21:4).

Paradoxically, this total Instruction proceeds in two opposing directions at once. We are torn loose from earthly attachments and ambitions—*contemptus mundi* (contempt of the world). And we are quickened to a divine but painful concern for the world—*amor mundi* (love of the world). He plucks the world out of our hearts, loosening the chains of attachment. And He hurls the world into our hearts, where we and He together carry it in infinitely tender love.

## Steps to Obedience

*A Testament of Devotion*, pp. 59-61

The reorientation described in the previous selection cannot be achieved once and for all, as by an ukase of the reason. It requires rather an active everyday obedience, ever faithful, ever watchful, ever ready to straighten itself after a mishap and ever abandoned to God's will.

**I**N CONTRAST to (the mystics') passive route to complete obedience most people must follow the active way, wherein we must struggle and, like Jacob of old, wrestle with the angel until the morning dawns, the active way wherein the will must be subjected bit by bit, piecemeal and progressively, to the divine Will.

But the first step . . . is the flaming vision of the wonder of such a life, a vision which comes occasionally to us all, through biographies of the saints, through the journals of Fox and early Friends, through a life lived before our eyes, through a haunting verse of the Psalms—"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25)—through meditation upon the amazing life and death of Jesus, through a flash of imagination or, in Fox's language, a great opening. But whatever the earthly history of this moment of charm, this vision of an absolutely holy life is, I am convinced, the invading, urging, inviting, persuading work of the Eternal One. It is curious that modern psychology cannot account wholly for flashes of insight of any kind, sacred or secular. It is as if a fountain of creative mind were welling up, bubbling to expression within prepared spirits. There is an infinite fountain of lifting power, pressing within us, luring

us by dazzling visions, and we can only say, The creative God comes into our souls. An increment of infinity is about us. Holy is imagination, the gateway of Reality into our hearts. The Hound of Heaven is on our track, the God of Love is wooing us to His Holy Life.

Once having the vision, the second step to holy obedience is this: Begin where you are. Obey *now*. Use what little obedience you are capable of, even if it be like a grain of mustard seed. Begin where you are. Live this present moment, this present hour as you now sit in your seats, in utter, utter submission and openness toward Him. Listen outwardly to these words, but within, behind the scenes, in the deeper levels of your lives where you are all alone with God the Loving Eternal One, keep up a silent prayer, "Open thou my life. Guide my thoughts where I dare not let them go. But Thou darest. Thy will be done." Walk on the streets and chat with your friends. But every moment behind the scenes be in prayer, offering yourselves in continuous obedience. I find this internal continuous prayer life absolutely essential. It can be carried on day and night, in the thick of business, in home and school. Such prayer of submission can be so simple. It is well to use a single sentence, repeated over and over and over again, such as this: "Be Thou my will. Be Thou my will," or "I open all before Thee. I open all before Thee," or "See earth through heaven. See earth through heaven." This hidden prayer life can pass, in time, beyond words and phrases into mere ejaculations, "My God, my God, my Holy One, my Love," or into the adoration of the Upanishad, "O Wonderful, O Wonderful, O Wonderful." Words may cease and one stands and walks and sits and lies in wordless attitudes of adoration and submission and rejoicing and exultation and glory.

And the third step in holy obedience, or a counsel, is this: If you slip and stumble and forget God for an hour, and assert your old proud self, and rely upon your own clever wisdom, don't spend too much time in anguished regrets and self-accusations but begin again, just where you are.

Yet a fourth consideration in holy obedience is this: Don't

grit your teeth and clench your fists and say, "I will! I will!" Relax. Take hands off. Submit yourself to God. Learn to live in the passive voice—a hard saying for Americans—and let life be willed through you. For "I will" spells not obedience.

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## Social Concern

*A Testament of Devotion*, pp. 122-124

Our obedience, as described in the previous passage, issues in world concern. But we cannot effectively marshal our resources by rushing everywhere or by squeezing new obligations into already packed schedules. Thomas Kelly knew this from bitter experience. The problem cannot be solved even by fixing quotas arbitrarily. It is only in the radiance of the divine light that priorities can be established and efficiency attained.

OUR fellowship with God issues in world-concern. We cannot keep the love of God to ourselves. It spills over. It quickens us. It makes us see the world's needs anew. We love people and we grieve to see them blind when they might be seeing, asleep with all the world's comforts when they ought to be awake and living sacrificially, accepting the world's goods as their right when they really hold them only in temporary trust. It is because from this holy Center we relove people, relove our neighbors as ourselves, that we are bestirred to be means of their awakening. The deepest need of men is not food and clothing and shelter, important as they are. It is God. We have mistaken the nature of poverty, and thought it was economic poverty. No, it is poverty of the soul, deprivation of God's recreating, loving peace. Peer into poverty and see if we

are really getting down to the deepest needs, in our economic salvation schemes. These are important. But they lie farther along the road, secondary steps toward world reconstruction. The primary step is a holy life, transformed and radiant in the glory of God.

This love of people is well-nigh as amazing as the love of God. Do we want to help people because we feel sorry for them, or because we genuinely love them? The world needs something deeper than pity; it needs love. (How trite that sounds, how real it is!) But in our love of people are we to be excitedly hurried, sweeping all men and tasks into our loving concern? No, that is God's function. But He, working within us, portions out His vast concern into bundles, and lays on each of us our portion. These become our tasks. Life from the Center is a heaven-directed life.

Much of our acceptance of multitudes of obligations is due to our inability to say No. We calculated that that task had to be done, and we saw no one ready to undertake it. We calculated the need, and then calculated our time, and decided maybe we could squeeze it in somewhere. But the decision was a heady decision, not made within the sanctuary of the soul. When we say Yes or No to calls for service on the basis of heady decisions, we have to give reasons, to ourselves and to others. But when we say Yes or No to calls on the basis of inner guidance and whispered promptings of encouragement from the Center of our life, or on the basis of a lack of any inward "rising" of that Life to encourage us in the call, we have no reason to give, except one—the will of God as we discern it. Then we have begun to live in guidance. And I find He never guides us into an intolerable scramble of panting feverishness. The Cosmic Patience becomes, in part, our patience, for after all, God is at work in the world. It is not we alone who are at work in the world, frantically finishing a work to be offered to God.

Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time. And it

makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the helm. And when our little day is done we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well.

The message of Thomas Kelly, as written in these four selections, appears to be the epitome of Christian wisdom. It echoes the testimony given in preceding generations by men of every culture and walk of life. Therefore, it is fitting that with this message we bring our journey to a close, without further conclusion.



## THE SOURCES AND THEIR TREATMENT

The precise citation for each source appears on the page on which material from that source is used.

One of the principal difficulties in compiling the present anthology was to secure translations of non-English sources. For it would be a serious mistake to assume that "everything worthwhile has been translated anyway." Furthermore, those translations which are extant are not all equally suitable. Thus I decided to give my own rendering in a number of cases.

While the first passage from Gregory of Nyssa is taken from the excellent modern version by Hilda C. Graef, I had to translate the second and third from the Greek text of Migne's *Patrology*. The works of Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux are available in several English translations, ancient and modern, from which I borrowed my material, except for "Love's Order," which I translated from the Latin. The *Opuscula* of Hugh of St. Victor is not extant in translation. I therefore used the Latin text of Migne for my rendering of the passages taken from it. "The Ninth Beatitude" is taken from the delightful translation of the *Fioretti* by T. W. Arnold, whose intentional archaism matches the flavor of the old narrative. But I preferred to present my own translation of the "Canticle of the Sun" and of the "Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer," in order to use the critical studies on the original text of Francis by V. Branca and the editors of Quaracchi.

There are thus far no good English versions of the great German mystics of the fourteenth century. Most of them are inaccurate, or flat, or based on uncritical texts. I have, therefore, translated afresh from the old German, making use of the most recent editions and textual researches by Joseph Quint, Ernst Diederich and L. Naumann for Eckhart and Tauler, and of Karl Bihlmeyer for Suso. Ruysbroeck I rendered from the Flemish, following the critical edition simultaneously published in Mecheln and Amsterdam in 1932. So far as I know the works from which those selections are taken are not extant in English, in contrast with Ruysbroeck's *Adornment of Spiritual Marriage*, of which there exist several English translations or adaptations, one of the latest being that of Evelyn Underhill.

For Thomas a Kempis, the difficulty was to pick one out of the numerous English versions. That of Benham, given in the Harvard Classics, commends itself by being both literal and literary, and was preferred to more recent ones. Gerson is not extant in English. I took as basic text for my rendering of "Theology" the Antwerp Edition of 1706, and for

"Love's Insight" the text of French sermons, first published by L. Mourin in 1946. For "Hope's Victory" I have retouched the English version of Savonarola's *Exposition on Psalm 31*, by E. H. Perowne, but I have decided to use my own translation of the letter to the friars of San Marco, "On Not Being Too Tense," having thus the benefit of the critical text established by R. Ridolfi, Firenze, 1938.

The Spanish mystics are generally well known to English readers. Translations are unusually good. The English edition of John of the Cross by E. Allison Peers can even be described as outstanding. I experienced more difficulty with the Post-Reformation Germans. A good translation of the works of Boehme is much wanted. Whatever is extant is grossly inaccurate, and Evelyn Underhill's arrangement recently published under the title *The Confessions of Jakob Boehme* fails to indicate the origin of the passages used. My translation follows the German text of the old Schiebler edition. Professor Nadler's excellent edition of the *Complete Works* of Johann Georg Hamann was the basis for my rendering of his work.

A few remarks may be appropriate with regard to the selections offered in the last three chapters. Beveridge's translation of the *Institutes* of Calvin is an old stand-by, which does not mean that a modern critical version is not sorely needed. Stillman's English edition of Fénelon's *Avis et Instructions*, from which we have borrowed, is generally correct. If it is not always clear, this obscurity is not imputable to the translator, but most probably to the deficient basic text on which he worked, since there is yet no definite French edition of Fénelon's works.

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The text of Biblical passages quoted in the selections may differ, at times considerably, from the text of our English Bibles. The reason for this is that, on the one hand, ancient authors quoted more freely than we do today; on the other hand, they quoted most of the time from ancient Greek or Latin versions. Thus we had to reproduce, or to translate, these texts as they wrote them. In order to make the identification of the Biblical passages easy, we give in every instance the reference by chapter and verse as in the English Bible. When, however, the text is so divergent from the English usage as to be unrecognizable, we shall indicate that the form actually printed reflects an original reading from the Septuagint (Sept.) or from the Vulgate (Vulg.), and we shall add a reference by chapter (or Psalm number) and verse according to the numeration used in these versions whenever it differs from the numeration of the English Bible.







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